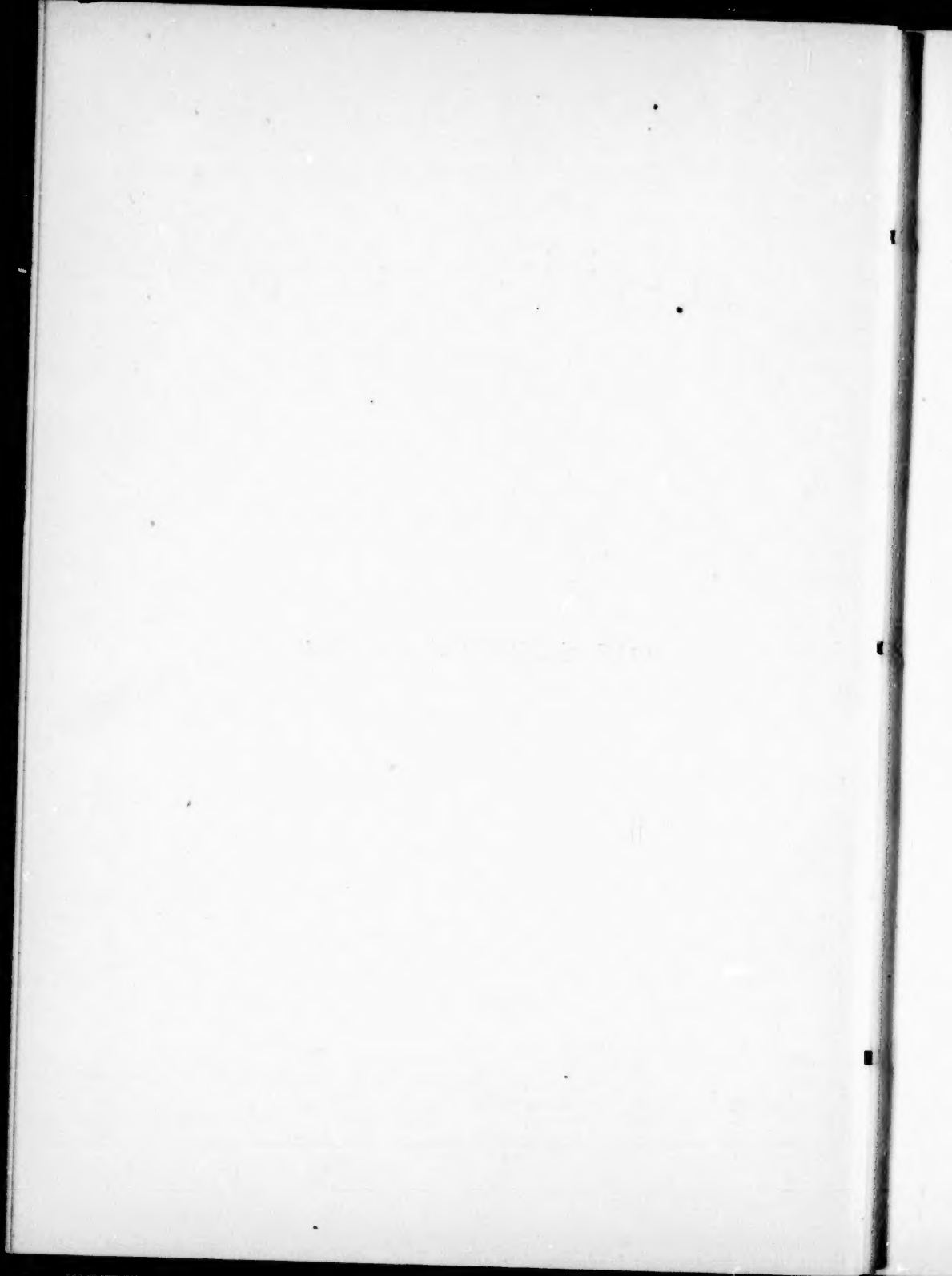


THE SCEPTIC'S CREED



THE
SCEPTIC'S CREED:

*CAN IT BE REASONABLY HELD?
IS IT WORTH THE HOLDING?*

A Review of the Popular Aspects of Modern Unbelief.

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PREFACE.

IT is frequently observed that "the Pulpit does not sufficiently deal with questions of the day." To meet that objection, in my own case, I invited my congregation to suggest topics for a series of Sunday evening discourses.

Among the subjects proposed was "The Sceptic's Creed—an examination of popular aspects of Unbelief." This proposal commanded my instant sympathy and prompt compliance.

New difficulties of belief, old and often-answered objections, arrayed in modern

attire, the hasty speculations of unfriendly science, and many plausible objections to revealed religion, find place in the pages of current literature. A most active Atheist and Secularist propaganda is eagerly striving by popular lectures, extensively delivered, and cheap publications, very diligently circulated, to spread unbelief in its coarsest and crudest forms. Among different classes of society, in addition to open denial and defined unbelief, there exists a widely-spread disturbance of religious conviction and much indefinite doubt in respect even of the very foundations of the ancient faith. These facts are my apology for giving a larger circulation and more permanent form to my discourses on *The Sceptic's Creed*. I developed my notes into a lecture, which was delivered, as one of

a series on Modern Unbelief, to the Young Men's Christian Association at Liverpool and elsewhere. And now, at the request of many friends, I venture to publish it, somewhat enlarged, but otherwise very slightly altered from its original form. Both in substance and style it is intended as a popular treatment of the subject. Large and learned treatises, dealing exhaustively with various aspects of unbelief, exist in great variety. Very many, however, of those who are disturbed with sceptical questions or distressed with religious doubt, and who have neither leisure nor, it may be, inclination to engage in recondite research, may yet be willing and even anxious to read some easy handbook. To such doubters and inquirers, specially among young men, I offer, with fraternal sympathy, my little volume. I trust, not

only that it contains no harsh words or ungenerous arguments, but that it has no undertone that can either offend or jar upon the feelings of the most sensitive Sceptic.

I have endeavoured to examine with fairness, and as fully as my limited space and purpose would permit, the expressed opinions of representative men on the subject in hand, and I have used freely some of the very remarkable concessions and contradictions to which they have given utterance ; but I trust that I have been mindful of the Christian duty of courtesy to those even who have been most aggressively hostile to Christianity, and that I have treated with invariable respect those distinguished writers in science and philosophy to whom I have referred ; many of whom, whatever may

be their attitude towards revealed religion, have done noble service to the sacred cause of truth, in various regions of research.

N. L.

CHRISTMAS,
1884.

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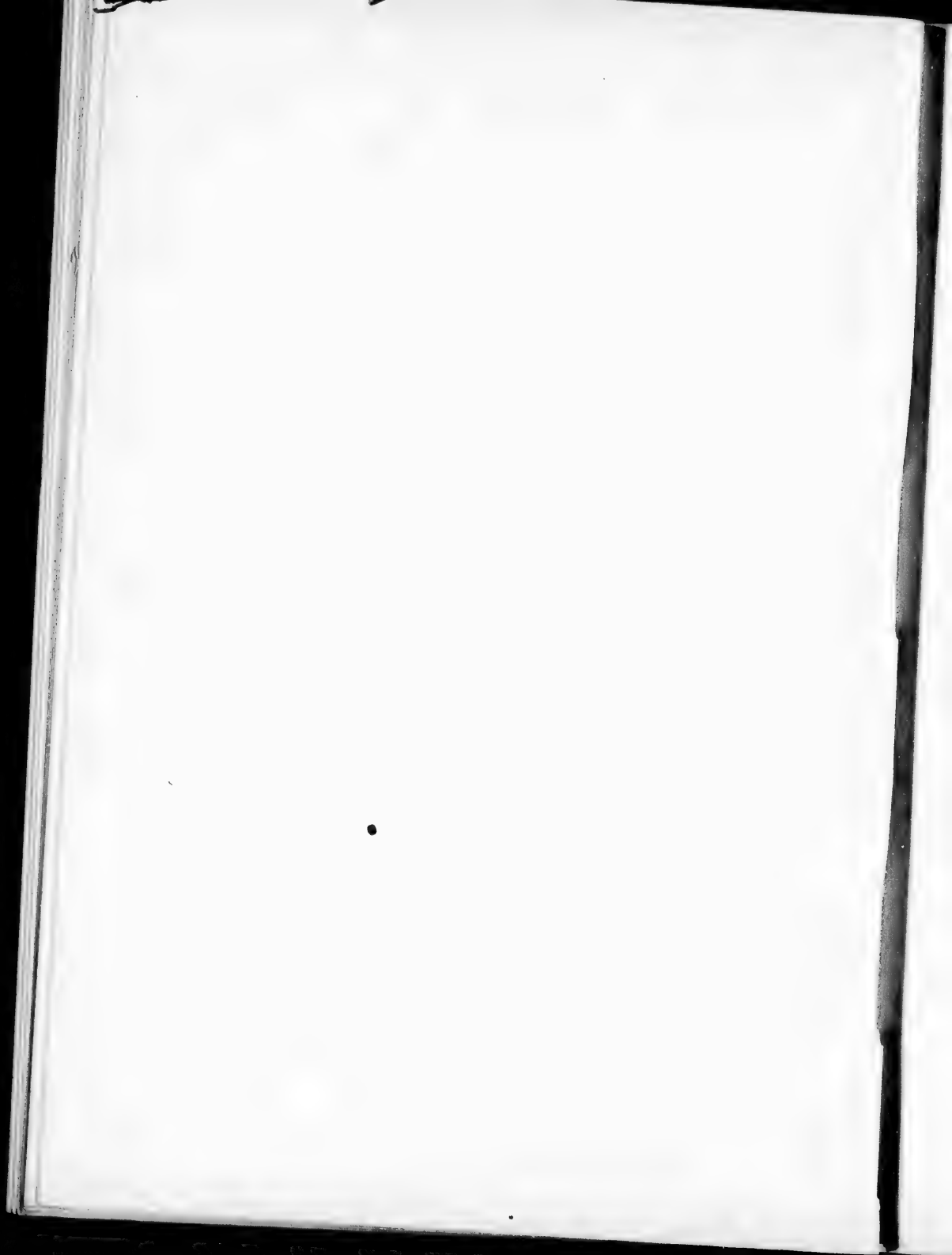
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"With strict reason the assertion has been made, that the question whether Christianity be true or false is the most practical of all questions. . . . It is of all other questions the one upon which those who have not a conclusion available for use, are most inexorably bound to seek for one. And, by further consequence, it is also the question to which the duty of following affirmative evidence, even although it should present to the mind no more than a probable character, and should not, *ab initio*, or even thereafter extinguish doubt, has the closest and most strict application."¹

—*The Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.*

A PATHETIC mission took me a short time ago to a well-known London cemetery. Passing along its central walk, a fragment of a printed page lying on the path arrested my attention ; and, stooping, I read in bold type, "I

¹ "Probability as the Guide of Conduct." *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1879.

know the present; of the future I know nothing; therefore, I live for the present, and let the future take care of itself."

As the subject for a discourse on *Modern Unbelief*, a friend a few days before had suggested "The Sceptic's Creed"; and there it lay, brief and defiant; *there*, too, in that grim setting, with a thousand monuments around, bearing their melancholy testimony to the perilous uncertainty and inevitable brevity of the life present, but witnessing, also, that that life in its darkest hour may find solace in the hope of the life future. And, alas! on that occasion I remembered only too vividly that there was soon to be added another monument *in memoriam* of a bright life lost on the hills of morning—

"For her the doubly dead, in that she died so young."

It was, indeed, an opportune moment for the prompt acceptance of the challenge that unbelief had flung so defiantly down.

Now in discussing some of the more usual aspects of current unbelief, we are dealing with questions of the most practical and urgent moment. "The question," says one distinguished authority, "whether Christianity be true or false, is the most practical of all questions."¹ And another has urged that "the religion question, whatever may be said or done, is the reigning question of the epoch."² At all times, indeed, it invites most careful

¹ "Probability as the Guide of Conduct." Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone. *Supra*.

² "Paganism in Paris." Père Hyacinthe. *Nineteenth Century*. Feb., 1880.

Locke says, "Besides his particular calling for the support of this life, every one has a concern in a future life, which he is bound to look after."—*Conduct of the Understanding*. Sec. viii., Religion.

thought, for it involves grave issues ; but at the present day it is one of commanding consideration, since, it must be sorrowfully confessed, there prevails, in all grades of society, great unsettledness of religious conviction, active scepticism, and many-sided doubt. Sometimes these are sharply defined and defiantly asserted, but more commonly they exist without distinctness of apprehension or exactness of definition ; they prevail rather as a nebulous impression and indefinite quantity—a haze in the atmosphere, but a haze that both dims and chills.

Men shrink, for various reasons, from giving defined shape and distinct expression to their conviction in respect of religion. Yet surely it is well for the Sceptic, as for every man, to give objective form and proportion to his confession of faith

and canon of conduct ; to look in the face, with calm and earnest eyes, the creed by which he determines to live and to die.

A general impression finds place, mainly, it may be, among younger men, but the evil infection spreads, that the evidences which authenticate Christianity have been somehow exploded, that modern science has pronounced against the primary facts of the Christian faith, and that the Sceptic holds his position under the general shelter and encouragement of the most advanced thought. There obtains, therefore, a creed, if so it may be called, sometimes frankly professed, but more generally tacitly implied, somewhat to the following effect :
" The present I know and possess ; of the future I know nothing. The things seen are plain and potent to the senses ; the invisible is the unknown and the future is

the uncertain. I live, therefore, for the known present, and let the unknown future take care for itself."

Now I challenge and controvert that entire position. As a matter of fact, I deny alike "the proven inadequacy of Christian evidence, the destructive results of scientific research, and the hostility of the most cultured thought." Moreover, I aver that the Sceptic's Creed, "I live for the present, and let the future take care of itself," is intellectually untenable and morally a morass.

It would be an interesting investigation, yielding many suggestive considerations, but carrying us away from the direct line of our present purpose, to endeavour to trace the mental and moral mood, and, as far as might be practicable, the motives that sway those who reject the Christian

faith for the Sceptic's creed. It must be acknowledged, indeed, with tender sympathy, that sometimes the melancholy descent is made with serious consideration and sad reluctance; even with

"Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears ;"

But, alas! how often it is "a leap in the dark," made with a flippant egotism or a mere sensual proclivity.

Christianity has its sublime declarations, its noble ethical principles, its historical and internal corroborations; it is a creed confessedly loftiest in thought, purest in principle, illumined with unique splendour of immortal hope, and around it murmur Æolian airs of memory; yet how often it is bartered, an ancient birthright for a mess of pottage; dropped, indeed—substance for shadow—to snatch at a creed that

shuts out God and immortality, and shuts in life within the precarious precincts of the present—a creed of frigid negations, alike without dignity, delight, or expectation?

Such a creed as “I live alone for the present, and leave the future to take heed for itself,” is one that lies below the level of enlightened and thoughtful belief. It is absurd in theory; it is impossible in practice.

“We look before and after,
And pine for what is not.”

Memory and hope, recollection and anticipation, are dominant forces in the formation of character and the guidance of conduct. No man does live, or can live, for the present alone; he quickens the present with expectations of a future, more or less remote, in which lies stored those results and rewards of effort and

joys of hope that invigorate and ennoble life. But every future is an uncertainty. No man can lay his hand upon to-morrow and say, "This, at least, is mine." That future of a few years, a few months, a few weeks hence towards which anticipations may be looking with such industrious eagerness, or joyful hope, is not an assured possession, but only a more or less remote contingency.

A well-known English judge, one Saturday evening, at the rising of his court, said to the jury, "Monday morning, gentlemen, at ten o'clock." At ten the jury assembled, but the judge was absent. By sudden experience he had proved that the future life may be nearer than to-morrow. Yet the Sceptic talks, and acts on the supposition, of the remote uncertainty of the future life, and the assured possession of

the life present. Yet in respect of this life we have no actual possession of an hour hence. Not a moment is certain to us beyond the immediate present. All our efforts, plans, hopes, as they spread themselves into the future, are justified only on a "balance of probabilities." But such a balance of probability may be found as to warrant and encourage the most vigorous and self-denying present efforts in assured expectations of future good.

In the article already quoted, by an eminent statesman, he says, "Let it suffice to bear in mind that there is no limit to the strength of working as distinguished from abstract certainty, to which probable evidence may not lead us along its gently ascending paths."¹ But has the Sceptic honestly estimated the balance of proba-

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 17, footnote ¹.

bilities involved in the grand argument for a future life? Or has he striven with earnest impartiality to balance the probabilities in favour of the Christian religion, before he separated himself from its ethical control, refused its revelations, and rejected its hopes? In the every-day affairs of the life present the Sceptic submits to be guided and governed not only by what Aristotle terms the *τεκμήρια*, "proofs positive," but also by a reasonable estimate of probabilities; for the *εἰκότα*, the "likelihoods," are a considerable force in determining the course and conduct of life. The Sceptic would not in reason be justified, therefore, in releasing himself from the constraints and forfeiting the consolations of the Christian religion, even though it did not offer proofs positive, if it vindicated its claim to Divine authority on

a clear balance of probabilities : "οὔκουν
ικανὸν ἂν λύσῃ ὅτι οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον, ἀλλὰ
δεῖ λύειν ὅτι οὐκ εἰκός." ¹

But Christianity is indisputably a most potent fact and actuality, amid the dominant intellectual and moral forces of this age ; and eighteen centuries ago we know that it "turned the world upside down." It provoked and surmounted the embittered hostility of the early centuries. It conquered Cæsar and converted the Roman empire. It has commanded the devout homage and defensive skill, in various ages, of men of the most acute, comprehensive, and cultured thought. It has evoked in every rank and condition of society a fire of devotion that many waters could not quench, and a firmness of fidelity that many tempests could not shake.

¹ Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Bk. II., cap. xxv.

Amid the advancing movements of present-day activity it betrays no sign of abated energy or inadequate leadership. With its lofty aims and benevolent enterprises it raises the whole tone and temper of civilization. Its disciples are among the foremost in liberal learning, and chief among those who are ready to every good word and work. From age to age, and amid all the chances and changes of time, it preserves the grand secret of satisfying some of the profoundest yearnings of human life. It distils solace in dreariest sorrow, affords succour in gravest crises ; gives "oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" ; brightens joyful hours with a sunnier glow, and inspires with the exultant assurance of eternal life the last moments of mortality.

Are not these, then, and kindred facts, cumulative and commanding probabilities that should give the Sceptic pause, who boasts that he lives for "the present"—meaning by that term *the present life*, with its but momentary present and only probable future—and who, whilst labouring, storing, hoping for the probable future of the life present, yet illogically sets aside or refuses to consider the vast and varied probabilities that sustain the Christian argument, and nourish the vigour of that hope whose fruition is life eternal?

Now it is said, in language more or less distinct, that "the evidences of Christianity are inadequate to sustain its claims to Divine origin and authority"; that "it lacks satisfactory and convincing proofs."

But what does the Sceptic want in the

way of proof? Is he quite sure that he has made clear even to himself what kind of *evidence* would satisfy him? Has he a clear conception of the proofs that he wants to convince his judgment and incline his will? If he has, ought he not to make known his demand in specific terms—first, in justice to himself; secondly, in fairness to those to whom he may make rightful appeal to assist him in satisfying a reasonable and urgent inquiry? And, further, because it may be that the Sceptic is asking for somewhat that it is in the nature of things unreasonable to expect; and that, therefore, in this high region of inquiry, it is impossible to supply.

May it not be that the Sceptic has been content to be discontent, because an indefinite and uncertain something

has not been forthcoming? If, however, he has not determined in his own mind exactly what it is he is seeking, he cannot reasonably be surprised if he has failed to find it. Much less can he be justified in affirming that this undefined something does not exist—a conclusion manifestly devoid of evidential confirmation—and yet because he thinks it does not exist, he has forsaken the creed of his childhood and the faith of his fathers, and accepted the cheerless negations of unbelief. But in adopting such a position the Sceptic convicts himself of the most serious inconsistency; for whilst in the act of renouncing the central principles of the Christian faith on the alleged ground of inadequate proof, he gravely adopts a destructive and hopeless speculation that is itself entirely unproven.

But let us take a further step.

The temper and tone of sceptical thought in recent years have doubtless been affected to a considerable degree by the methods and results of modern scientific inquiry. There is a widely diffused but clearly inaccurate opinion, that scientific discovery is the brilliant monopoly of modern times ; yet assuredly to earlier ages belongs the honour of having laid broad and deep the foundations on which rises the noble superstructure of modern science ; and if those earlier ages were less fertile in results, they were not less remarkable for inventive ingenuity and inquisitive observation. But the quickened activities of intellectual enterprise, enjoying the freer opportunities and improved apparatus of modern times, have made more numerous

excursions into the regions of scientific research, and have brought from thence their *spolia opima*. The brilliant conquests of recent scientific adventure are made known by the wonderful facilities now possessed for reaching the public ear; and it may be that these conquests have been occasionally unduly magnified or hastily misinterpreted; and that they have excited somewhat feverish misconceptions. But deliberately examined and viewed in their true light, they are indeed a noble addition to the sum total of human knowledge.

Now the achievements and conquests of the pioneers of scientific adventure must be of profound interest to those specially who believe that the universe exhibits the handiwork and declares the glory of a Personal Intelligence and

Beneficent Will. The scientist is the apostle of natural order. Sometimes, indeed, being a man of like passions with others, he is narrow, bigoted, and intolerant; then he must be "withstood to the face, because he is to be blamed"; but, sent forth on a noble mission, to lift the veil and penetrate to the inmost shrine of nature, to learn her divine secrets and to interpret them, "his feet are beautiful upon the mountains, as he bringeth good tidings" of the wisdom, power, and beneficence that underlie matter, force and law; and, by that Christian confederation pre-eminently which recognises the universe as a creation by Intelligent Fatherhood, the scientist should be hailed as an ally and succoured as a colleague—for he too is doing the work of an evangelist.

Whilst, therefore, acknowledging with respect and gratitude the patience, assiduity, acute observation, and manifold labours of eminent physicists, yet it must not be forgotten that every department of human inquiry has its own proper methods and results. Scientific facts may be so demonstrated that they must of necessity produce intellectual conviction. Denial would be rationally impossible. But facts belonging to the sphere of religious thought and inquiry are not capable of the same kind of treatment. The evidences, however, that sustain human trust in the Divine existence, faith in the Christ of history, and the hope of the future life, though they are dissimilar from those that are granted to the physical inquirer, yet are not inferior in degree—they yield to their possessor enlightened

contentment and an impregnable *moral* conviction.

The scientist with instruments of highest ingenuity, and by calculations of mathematical exactness, demonstrates some of his discoveries; many of the conclusions of science, however, as certainly as the declarations of revelation demand the exercise of faith. But the questions which lie properly within the domain of religious inquiry must be treated by other though not less satisfactory methods, than those of ordinary scientific research. The Divine existence cannot be demonstrated like the Copernican system or the correlation of forces. The physicist proves and illustrates by experiment the undulatory theory of light, its "radiant energy," or the convertibility of heat; but such methods are not at the command

of the Christian apologist; yet the doctrine of a future life, and the central verities of the Christian faith, are sustained by evidences as powerful to win the assent of enlightened trust and the homage of moral conviction.¹

¹ "The right of the Spiritual World to speak of its own phenomena is as secure as the right of the Natural World to speak of itself. What is Science but what the Natural World has said to natural men? What is Revelation but what the Spiritual World has said to Spiritual men? Let us at least ask what Revelation has announced with reference to this Spiritual Law of Biogenesis; afterwards we shall inquire whether Science, while endorsing the verdict, may not also have some further vindication of its title to be heard."—*Natural Law in the Spiritual World* (Drummond), cap. "Biogenesis," p. 73.

"There is, then, no distrust of Science. . . . Its method and its results are worthy of all praise and of all gratitude, if only we recognise their due limits. A calm consideration of them must lead to the conclusion that there are problems set to us by our own knowledge and experience

The Savilian Professor in the University of Oxford, in an admirable paper,¹ says

which are utterly insoluble by the methods of Science, as these are expounded and applied.

. . . Our contention is shortly this, that the method which is sufficient when dealing with the phenomena of inorganic nature is insufficient when we enter on the sphere of organic life ; that the method which is adequate for organic life is insufficient to deal with the phenomena of conscious life ; and even the method which deals with conscious life has to be extended and modified when it deals with the complex phenomena of personal and social life. In every higher sphere to which Science comes, it must recognise the existence of new principles and new forces, added differences which cannot be merged in a lower identity. . . .

In the Materialistic explanations of the universe, we find that the formula of Materialism works very well until the phenomena of consciousness emerge, and then it breaks down." *Et seq.—Is God Knowable?* (Iverach) cap. i., "Statement of the Question ;" *vide* also cap. iii., "Anthropomorphism," and cap. v., "The Agnosticism of Science."

¹ *Modern Science and Natural Religion.* London, S.P.C.K.

in respect of Christian evidences, "These evidences, from the very nature of the case, cannot be mathematical or demonstrative or scientific; they belong rather to that class of evidence which we call probable; and to that class, be it observed, upon which alone we determine the conduct of our lives, for 'to us probability is the guide of life.' And though these probable evidences range greatly in degree, and although not any of them taken alone and by itself may be sufficient to command entire consent, and enforce an absolute conviction, nevertheless, when taken altogether, they may—they often do—by their consilience from many different and *independent* sources, furnish the mind with the highest moral certainty of which it is capable." And as an *example* of "moral certainty," a distin-

guished logician says, "the belief that there is a future life, which though not absolutely demonstrable, rests upon such grounds that it ought to influence the conduct (*mores*) of every man." ¹

Let us now proceed to deal with the most prominent objections urged by current sceptical opinion, by considering some of those "evidences" that more directly confront the Sceptic's Creed. These cumulative and "consilient" evidences can only be partially and briefly treated, indicated rather than exhausted within the limited confines of this argument. Yet it may be possible to show that a creed without God, Christ, or immortality—life for the present, without thought or care for the future—is inade-

¹ *Outlines of the Necessary Laws of Thought.*
Archbishop Thompson.

quate to the measure of human need, intellectually unreasonable, and morally degrading: a creed alike without support or shelter from the most recent science or the most cultured thought.

It has been urged, and with a widely sustained opinion, prevalent in different ages and among various races of men, that "a *supernatural* revelation can only be supported by supernatural evidences." The believer in the Christian religion, however, affirms that such evidences have been most amply and satisfactorily supplied. We shall see presently for ourselves some of the evidences which justify this opinion. But in the meantime let us appeal to an impartial and highly competent witness, a distinguished scholar and critic, the author of *Ecce Homo*. He says, "The fact that Christ appeared as

a worker of miracles is the best attested fact in His whole biography, both by the absolute unanimity of all the witnesses, by the confirmatory circumstances just mentioned, and by countless other confirmations of circumstances not likely to be invented, striking sayings inseparably connected with them, etc., in particular cases." ¹ And again, "Miracles are, in themselves, extremely improbable things, and cannot be admitted unless supported by a great concurrence of evidence. For some of the evangelical miracles there is a concurrence of evidence which, when fairly considered, is very great indeed ; for example, for the Resurrection, for the appearance of Christ to St. Paul, for the general fact that

¹ *Ecce Homo*. Preface to fifth edition.

Christ was a miraculous healer of disease. The evidence by which these facts are supported cannot be tolerably accounted for by any hypothesis except that of their being true. And if they are once admitted, the antecedent improbability of many miracles less strongly attested is much diminished."¹

Here, then, is the opinion of an acute and impartial critic, who, standing himself outside the pale of orthodox opinion, and having weighed with dispassionate care the evidences in favour of the supernatural in the life and work of Christ, is constrained to confess that "they cannot be tolerably accounted for by any hypothesis except that of their being true."

¹ Cap. ii.

But now we are met by an opposite objection. A curious chapter might be written on "the contradictories of unbelief." The statement is, "no testimony reaches to the supernatural, but only to apparent and sensible facts;" and, further, that "the probabilities of mistake on the part of the witnesses are greater than the probability of the supernatural events attested." Therefore, according to this view, "the supernatural cannot be proven on testimony." This form of assault has, however, been modified to a certain extent, and in a really remarkable fashion, though in terms sufficiently explicit, by the well-known author of *The Creed of Christendom*.¹ Now, as he held an eminent place in letters, elaborately dis-

¹ *The Creed of Christendom*. By W. Rathbone Greg. Cap. xiii., Miracles

cussed the question immediately in hand, forcibly represented a considerable school of objectors, was undoubtedly a sincere seeker after truth, and here illustrates the kind of plausible and perilous statements by which so many are wafted across the gloomy sea of religious doubt, we propose to examine with some care his statement in respect of the supernatural. "Miracles," says our author, "can never be proved by *documentary* evidence." A less than "never" is an impossible quantity in any calculation; but he adds, "*least of all* by such documentary evidence as we possess." He, however, further explains and qualifies his meaning as follows: "We fully admit, at the outset of our argument, that a miracle, as well as any other occurrence, is capable of proof by testimony—provided only the testimony

be adequate in kind and in quantity. The testimony must be of the same kind as that on which we should accept any of the more sure and marvellous among natural phenomena, and must be clear, direct, and ample, in proportion to the marvellousness, anomalousness, and rarity of the occurrence. This, it appears to us, is all that philosophy authorizes us to demand for the authentication of the *fact part* of a miracle."

Miracles," we say, "are not, and never can be, a sure foundation for a revealed religion—an historic creed. . . . Now, miracles are evidence only to those who see them or can sift the testimony which affirms them. Therefore, a revelation, whose credentials are miracles, *can be a revelation only to the age in which it appears*. The superhuman powers of its

Preacher can authenticate it only to those who witness the exertion of them, and—more faintly and feebly—to those who have received and scrutinized *their* direct testimony.” And in yet further limitation of the practicable possibilities of the case, our author introduces a learned mathematician’s “calculation,” which indeed, he says, “many will think puerile,” and I venture to add, not a few will think ridiculous, to the following effect: “The *concurring* testimony of *six independent, competent, veracious* witnesses would suffice, *but not less.*”

The ground here taken is theoretically very different from that of the two immediately preceding objections to the validity of Christian evidences, but it produces results equally destructive. The theory of our author, then, is: (1) Miracles

may occur ; (2) they may convince actual observers—these concessions are so much gained—; (3) they may be satisfactorily attested by the *spoken* testimony of “six” eye-witnesses : “*but not less.*” If, then, by any unhappy accident, since there is apparently some mysterious mathematical merit in the number *six*, these *testes oculati* should be diminished to *five*, the unhappy pentarchy would be as valueless in the witness-box as five ciphers preceded by no numeral in an arithmetical calculation.

But further, if even the “six,” whose *spoken* testimony would be sufficient to prove a miraculous occurrence, were to commit, with whatever precautions, their testimony to writing, the document would be evidentially valueless, since “miracles can never be proved by *documentary* evi-

dence." *Litera scripta manet*, but in this case, alas ! that which constitutes its permanence destroys its validity ! Now let us press this elaborate theory to its logical results, and we shall find to what an unreasonable, not to say absurd, conclusion this theory of unbelief inevitably leads.

Suppose then, by way of illustration, that an event supernatural should occur—the *possibility* has been granted—in the presence of dumb witnesses, and, save for lack of speech, of indisputable competence intellectual, moral, and numeral ; yet they could not prove the occurrence of the miracle, since they would be necessitated to do so in writing, and "miracles can never be proved by *documentary* evidence." We anticipate a probable objection to this inference, and we shall reply to it pre-

sently. But, first, let us take another illustration.

Suppose that "*six*" or more competent witnesses should see a miracle in Jerusalem, London, or New York, they could, according to the author of *The Creed of Christendom*, only attest the event satisfactorily or conclusively to those who could personally interview these witnesses; for he adds, "the essence of the whole question lies in this, that *we have not* the Apostles and Evangelists to cross-examine." But manifestly not "wholly in this!" If we had the "Apostles and Evangelists," to whom we owe the Gospel narratives, they would be two short of the mathematical minimum; and something, also, would depend upon the capacity of the cross-examiners!

This, however, is the distinct contention

of our author, that if a miracle were wrought, not only before "six" select witnesses, but even "in presence of five hundred brethren," in any of the great centres of civilization, the miracle could only be satisfactorily proved to those who could personally cross-examine the eye-witnesses, and that there are no resources available to intelligence and culture by which they could give in any trustworthy and evidentially conclusive manner publicity and literary perpetuity to their testimony. In short, supposing a miracle to be wrought in London—and the possibility of a miracle is not in dispute—it would be simply impossible to transmit to Newcastle or New York the tidings in any written form, so authenticated as to be adequate proof of the occurrence of the supernatural event. If some grave in

Westminster Abbey were to give back to life its illustrious dead, it would be impossible to frame documents that could prove the occurrence of the miracle to residents in New England or Northumberland. Can such a conclusion be seriously accepted? Yet to this it must come if "miracles can never be proved by *documentary* evidence."

The more enlightened advocates of such a theory would naturally shrink from being forced, by the inexorable necessities of logical deduction, into such an absurd position; and probably they would endeavour to evade the indefensible conclusion by contending against the foregoing illustrations, that "it would be possible, both in respect of the dumb and the distant, to adopt such cautionary methods in receiving and recording the concurrent

evidence of credible eye-witnesses, of attesting it by the counter-signature of competent cross-examiners, so as to produce a scientifically attested and verified record, that might be multiplied by the press for circulation to the uttermost parts of the earth, and which would be conclusive evidence and incontestable proof of the supernatural occurrence." But this would be proof by *documentary* evidence.

Now if it be possible to obtain authenticated documents, that would be legitimate and conclusive evidence of the supernatural to those who are five hundred or five thousand miles distant in space from the occurrence, they would be equally authentic and conclusive to those who are twelve months or twelve centuries distant in time from the occurrence. The documents once sufficiently verified for the

absent, *i.e.* the distant in space or time, they require only to be carefully protected and securely transmitted, for they remain, like the ancient lawgiver, their natural force unabated by lapse of years.

Otherwise, indeed, we are driven into another absurdity of conclusion. For if the credibility of documentary evidence necessarily diminishes in the process of years, we are compelled to acknowledge that there must be, in respect of any event, however remarkable and historically attested, a vanishing point of distance, from the date of the occurrence, at which it is simply impossible to prove it—a point, therefore, at which the most veracious historic statements must descend to the rank of fiction, since *they* are equally incapable of proof.¹

¹ Let me refer the Sceptic who desires to in-

In other words, we must confess, in respect of the most notable events, that there is an imaginary line in time somewhere, not by any means determined or determinable, up to which the authenticated record of an event goes in and out

quire more carefully into the documentary validity of the Gospels, and into the formation of the Canon of Holy Scripture, to Dr. Westcott's *History of the Canon of the New Testament*.

The Bible in the Church, by the same author, is "a popular account of the collection and reception of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church." *Reasonable Apprehensions and Reassuring Hints* (Rev. H. Footman), an admirable little book for the times, written with candour, courage, and skill, contains in Sec. III. "Critical Difficulties," some valuable suggestions in respect of the testimony to Christ of the first and second centuries. For popular use, Thomas Cooper's *Bridge of History over the Gulf of Time* is a most excellent handbook. The author has answered in easy form objections, the frequency and force of which he himself had known but too well.

among men in bodily form and vital reality; but crossing that fatal line, it exhales, and becomes henceforth a pale and disembodied ghost, flitting across the undisturbed memory of the world! Is this a reasonable or credible opinion? But it is the logical result of the theory in respect of the testimony to Christian miracles of the author of *The Creed of Christendom*.

Let us now turn to the objection to the validity of the testimony to miracles quoted first.¹

"No testimony reaches to the supernatural, but only to apparent and sensible facts." The supernatural, then, is possible, but it is impossible to certify its manifestations. But the sceptical objec-

¹ *Vide* p. 43.

tor who takes this ground will, at least, admit that "God is possible," since he admits the possibility of the supernatural. Moreover, the declaration of the ancient Psalmist, that it is "the fool" that hath said in his heart, "There is no God," is sustained by the modern scientist. Professor Huxley speaks of the "unsurpassed absurdity of the philosopher who tries to prove that there is no God." ¹

But granted the possibility of God, it is at least *possible* that He may interrupt the usual order of antecedent and consequent in natural phenomena, and produce an

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, Nov. 1874.

"Atheism . . . is speculatively monstrous."

"Atheism is but another name for feebleness."

"Atheism, that demoralizing palsy of human nature."—*Natural Religion*, by the author of *Ecce Homo*.

event *supernatural*. The sceptical contention is, however, "no testimony can authenticate the supernatural." His theory, therefore, is this: "miracles are possible, but it is impossible to prove their occurrence." God may be; He may make a revelation of Himself; He may accredit that revelation by supernatural attestation, but it is impossible in the nature of things for one man, or a group of men, to certify the occurrence of the supernatural event. The highest miracle, therefore, according to this theory, would be, not some such supernatural event as the giving eyesight to the blind, or raising the dead, but to prove that such an event had taken place.

The immediate point in dispute, then, is not the possibility of a miracle being wrought before the eyes of men, but, that

actually seeing it, the witnesses should be able determinately to recognise its supernaturalism, and find means to inform and convince other cultured, upright, and judicious men of what they had seen.

But since the supernatural may occur, may not this, also, occur, if even it be miraculous, that men seeing the supernatural may assuredly recognise its occurrence, and so attest it as to satisfy the intellectual and moral conviction of impartial and competent inquirers? This, however, on the theory before us, is the one fact that is denied, but happily this is exactly the fact that can be proved to a demonstration. Men have so attested that they have witnessed the miraculous, as to produce the most profound conviction in the mind and heart of men of every rank, age

and condition; peasant, scholar and philosopher. So that this objection also evaporates under analysis.

“ . . . Circumfusa repente
Scindit se nubes, et in æthera purgat apertum.”

The Sceptic pleads again: “I live for the present life, because I have it and enjoy it; but the future life I leave to take care of itself, because it is an

“ ‘Undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns.’

“A continuous stream of emigrants have flowed for centuries thitherward; let one return and tell us, at least, the fact of the existence of that land that is said to lie beyond the sun: let one come back from the dead, and so prove that what we call death is life elsewhere; and I shall believe and live for the future life also.”

We have here, broadly stated, a current form of objection. It is one certainly that has the merit of antiquity. Eighteen centuries ago it found place among the "difficulties of belief," and was replied to by that unique Teacher, of whom Jean Paul Richter says, that "being the holiest among the mighty, and the mightiest among the holy, lifted with His pierced* hand empires off their hinges, turned the stream of civilization out of its channel, and still governs the ages." He said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."¹ And His own subsequent history too terribly confirmed the truth of His statement. The testimony of Apostles and evangelists has been added to law-

¹ St. Luke xvi. 31.

givers and prophets. One *has* risen from the dead, yet the Sceptic is not persuaded.

But he objects, "I decline to accept the evangelical narrative of Christ's resurrection from the dead as a historic fact, the evidences being insufficient to sustain the documents as trustworthy historic records." This objection, however, implies, if it is to excuse the Sceptic's unbelief, that he has gone carefully into an examination of the varied and somewhat extensive system of evidences by which these Christian documents are authenticated ; or that he has, at least, endeavoured according to the best of his ability, and with honest impartiality, to balance the testimony of competent critics, who have undertaken the learned labour of examining the

historic value of the Christian records, and that he has come to the deliberate—may we not add, to the *regretful*?—conclusion, that the Gospel miracles—including the supreme one of Christ's resurrection—are not sustained by adequate evidence as historic facts; but that they owe their origin either to the disordered imagination of Christ's first disciples or that they are the fanatical inventions of a later age. But such a conclusion as this, the author of *Ecce Homo* truly says, "destroys the credibility of the documents not partially but wholly, and leaves Christ a personage as mythical as Hercules."¹

Is any fair-minded and earnest Sceptic prepared for such a conclusion, and ready to affirm that he has renounced

¹ *Ecce Homo*, cap. 5.

the ancient faith because he has actually discovered, or come to the sorrowful conclusion, as the result of conscientious investigation, that Christianity is founded in falsehood ; that the Christ of history is a myth, like the ancient demi-gods, or that His historic reality being granted, He must be stripped of "the gorgeous robe" of the supernatural, descend from the sublime elevation to which the deluded faith and love of eighteen centuries have raised Him, and take rank with Plato and Aristotle, Zeno and Seneca, Confucius and Mahomet, one among other great world-teachers, to be crowned only, if crowned at all, with the "platted thorns" of the martyr?

Is this, then, conceivably the melancholy end of the world's noblest efforts, aims, and hopes—the heart-rending dis-

covery that the majestic fabric of Christendom, altars, temples, literature, arts, and "living stones" (λίθοι ζῶντες), the cherished result of two thousand years of suffering and endeavour, consecrated by prayer and cheered by song, is built upon a treacherous morass of error, untruth and superstition, and that sooner or later the resplendent structure must fall, leaving only the broken disorder of a mighty ruin, to amaze future ages with the noble work and ambitious proportions of that majestic edifice raised by the credulity of mankind to the honour of Jesus of Nazareth?

But the Sceptic must admit, at any rate, that the enlightened and busy enthusiasm of Christian worship, and Christian work, foremost among the beneficent activities of this eager age,

betray no sign that the intellect or the heart of the world has detected any indications of insecurity in the foundations of the ancient faith, or of shaken love and devotion to its Divine Founder. Even M. Renan, in his *Vie de Jesu*, says of Christ, "a thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved since Thy death than during the days of Thy pilgrimage here below, Thou wilt become to such a degree the Corner Stone of humanity, that to tear Thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations." Theodore Parker, too, despite his naturalistic and unitarian views, felt the unique and everlasting ascendancy of Christ, and with a generous candour he urged eloquently in his *Life of Jesus* the argument from results. "Consider," says he, "what a work His

words and deeds have wrought in the world. Remember that the greatest minds have seen no farther, and added nothing to His doctrine of religion ; that the richest hearts have felt no deeper, and added nothing to the sentiment of religion ; have set no loftier aim, no truer method than His of perfect love to God and man. Measure Him by the shadow He has cast into the world—no, by the light He has shed upon it. Shall we be told such a man never lived—the whole story is a lie ? Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived. But who did their wonders and thought their thoughts ? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated Jesus ? None but Jesus.”

‘The great surprise of human history was the coming of Jesus Christ. The

uniqueness of His Person is an ultimate fact of Christianity. Whoever would deny the presence of the Divine power in human history must first reduce the character of Jesus of Nazareth to the level of the possibilities of common human nature. He is Himself the greatest of His miracles. If by close historical scrutiny, or critical questioning, we fail to resolve the miraculous character of Jesus — the ultimate fact of Christianity — into the common, known elements of our human nature; if the laws of heredity prove insufficient to explain His generation, then the further question will at once arise whether there may not be other than natural elements present in human history, which come to their perfect power in Jesus of Nazareth; whether we may not find in

the laws and in the forces of a supernatural evolution the sufficient explanation of His miraculous Person. If the appearance of Jesus is not natural in comparison with other lives; if the Christ of the Gospel seems to be a miraculous fact contrary to human experience, then, before we throw aside the historical evidences which centre in the uniqueness of His Person, and flow from the originality of His life, we are at least bound to inquire whether there may not be a broader view of human history and a deeper science of the Creation, in which we may find revealed an unsuspected and larger naturalness in this greatest miracle of the ages — the personality of Jesus Christ.”¹

¹ *Old Faith in New Light.* Newman Smyth. Cap. v. An admirable handbook, well worthy of

The miracles, however—pre-eminently the central one of His resurrection—are essential elements in the narratives of the life and work of Christ; and an Apostle, himself a man of noble intellect and liberal culture, rests the whole superstructure of Christianity upon Christ's resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ."¹ The Sceptic, therefore, who refuses to

the Sceptic's or Doubter's careful examination. For a further consideration of the subject of Christ's unique place in history, see *The Christ of History*, by Dr. John Young; and specially the masterly chapter (x.)—"The character of Jesus forbids His possible classification with men"—in *Nature and the Supernatural*, by Dr. Horace Bushnell.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15.

acknowledge the resurrection of Christ, *i.e.* that "One *has* come back from the dead," is left to a conclusion lying within the dark and desolate region of irrational belief that the Gospel narratives are either the product of fanatical superstition, or a malicious conspiracy; and that the whole edifice of Christianity is founded in falsehood and reared in fraud.

But, true or false, it is beyond dispute that multitudes in the first age of Christianity believed in the resurrection—they at least, were convinced that "One *had* risen from the dead," yet whilst some remained to worship, others retired to persecute. They "took counsel" how they might destroy the testimony.¹ Evidence of the supernatural, then, when actually supplied, was not sufficient to win the

¹ S. Matt. xxviii. 11, *et seq.*

faith and captivate the will: "they would not be persuaded, though One rose from the dead."¹

But the doubter may object that the events are now so remote, so obscured by the mists of temporal distance, that he cannot admit their reality or yield to their recital. Yet surely he does not propose to confine his belief within the narrow orbit of his own personal observation, or the contracted circle of the present. "No; not exactly that;" but he urges again that "Christian antiquity is too far removed for us to take security in respect of its surprising statements."

Such a proposition has two serious defects.

First, it implies that if we were nearer by some centuries, more or less, we should

¹ S. Luke xvi. 31.

be better able to test the veracity of the witnesses, or the genuineness and authenticity of the documents, and at any rate feel more inclined to accredit their statements. We deny that. The theory fails under a practical test. The first century as well as the nineteenth had its doubters and deniers; and every intervening age has its ample records of unbelief.

Secondly, pressed to its logical result, the objection lands us in the absurdity already noted; viz. that if evidence in respect of an event must necessarily grow fainter in process of time, there is inevitably a vanishing point of distance from the date of its occurrence, however remarkable, at which it is impossible to prove it.

Coleridge thought that the evidences in favour of the main facts of the Christian

faith, were an increasing quantity in history. The sustained vigour of its vitality, its widening influence and accumulating work is its growing evidence—Christendom the proof of Christianity.

The Sceptic will admit as beyond contention that millions of people believe that "*One has* risen from the dead"; and that whilst with a certain proportion of these, this belief has wrought itself into the very fibre and tissue of their character, and gives motive and direction to their life, that there is yet another proportion—possibly the larger proportion—of those who do not doubt the fact of Christ's resurrection, and have no scruples as to the sufficiency of the historic evidences, who are yet unchanged in life and character by these acknowledged events.

"Precisely," retorts the Sceptic, "because

these events are too remote and dim to take a firm and effective hold of the imagination, the conscience, and the will. What I want," he continues, "is a revelation to myself, attested by some supernatural manifestation; a life from the dead which shall prove to me a life beyond life, a future life: or such a fact authenticated to living and trustworthy witnesses; then I can accept the doctrine, and yield my will." Be not deceived: the experiment, as we have seen, has been well tried, and signally failed.

But let the Sceptic who asks for some such direct evidence as this, and his name is legion, consider whether the conditions on which he is offering his faith and conviction are founded in reason.

It is not *one* resurrection or return from the dead, or other such supernatural evi-

dence, that he asks, but thousands of them. If they are necessary to convince the unbeliever, they must appear in every age, in every locality, and to select groups of witnesses; but their very frequency, and the order of their recurrence, would superinduce the indifference that comes of familiarity. Events are taking place constantly, by what is called natural process, not less wonderful than any "miracle," but they cease to strike with wonder because they recur with regularity.

But let us hear the Sceptic's demand in another form. "Give us," he says, "at any rate, such evidences as will satisfy the *intellectual* requirement—we ask for *logical proof*."

On what reasonable ground, however, does the Sceptic demand proofs in respect

of God, Christ, and the future life, that shall satisfy the "pure reason," or meet the rigid requirements of logical analysis? Logic is not our sole guide in human affairs, nor do purely intellectual considerations rule us in the movements and decisions of every-day life. Nay, it is the lower and narrower rather than the higher and wider concerns of life that are amenable to intellectual verification or subject to the conditions of logical investigation. Is it reasonable, then, to demand that the Divine existence shall be proven by a purely intellectual process, and the fact of a future life be reduced to a syllogism?

As an inquirer in the highest department of human investigation, the Sceptic does himself grave injustice by neglecting any of his powers, or by shutting up in durance any of those sentinel faculties

which should keep keenest outlook on the watch-tower of life. Surely in this supreme concern no capacity should be idle, no sense asleep; but rather with loins girt, and every energy alert, the honest and earnest Sceptic should seek after God, if haply he may find Him, and with sleepless vigil he should watch for signs of a dawn that would make eternal morning in his sky. Yet in respect of those questions that deal with God and the future life, the Sceptic asks for *logical* proof, and evidences that shall command the recognition of the "pure reason"; as though logic ought to be his sole "guide, philosopher and friend," and the conclusions of the pure reason his only satisfying portion.

Professor Tyndall complains that "the action of the pure reason is disturbed by

the emotions." And why not? Man cannot live on bread and logic; or satisfy the activities and aspirations of his many-sided life with the exercises of "the pure reason." The distinguished Professor has urged, with elaborate eloquence, "*The Uses of the Imagination*" in the pursuits of science; but in inquiries of yet more sacred moment, are emotional energies to be excluded, and moral faculties to have no function? Impossible. Human life cannot attain its true proportions in the keen, cold air of "pure reason." The moral and emotional faculties play their mighty part in the formation of opinion, the moulding of character, and in giving force and aim, grace and colour to life:

"Nor can it suit us to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men."

Indeed, Professor Tyndall has himself

acknowledged that "religious feeling is as much a verity as any part of human consciousness, and against it, on its subjective side, the waves of science beat in vain."¹ And again, in even more suggestive terms, he says, "Feeling appeared in the world before knowledge; and thoughts, conceptions, and creeds, founded on emotion, had, before the dawn of science, taken root in man. Such thoughts, conceptions, and creeds must have met a deep and general want, otherwise their growth could not have been so luxuriant, nor their abiding force so strong."² Precisely so; the moral nature was quicker in its movement than the intellectual, the emotions acted in advance of the "pure reason," instinct and intuition were before logic;

¹ Virchow on Evolution. *Nineteenth Century*, Nov., 1878.

² *Ibid.*

"before the dawn of science," a hunger of the heart impelled human life to seek after God.

It is not, then, the contention of the theologian alone, but the concession of the scientist, that "a deep and general want" impelled the first prompt movements of human life towards "conceptions and creeds" founded in the emotions. But the right use of the emotions is a proper exercise of the most cultured life, according to the scientist and Positivist, for even Mr. Frederick Harrison tells us that "the first of all our duties is to obtain for ourselves, and procure for others, a sound, complete, real education, an education not merely scientific, but moral and emotional."¹

¹ "Creed of a Layman." *Nineteenth Century*, Mar., 1881.

Religion, then, meets a profound and instinctive necessity of human life. Unbelief is not the native air of man. He cannot flourish in full proportions on the negation of God and futurity. He has in him, as constituent elements, capacities and desires that terminate only in the Eternal and Divine—a heart-hunger for a “bread of life that cometh down from God.” But surely capacity implies opportunity; appetite, satisfaction; function, use. The exquisite structural arrangements of the organs of sight and hearing imply vision and sound. The functions of respiration signify an atmosphere. The scientific naturalist, disinterring the fragments of pre-historic fauna, infers, from the structure of their remains, what were the elements in which these living creatures existed and the aliment on which

they were nourished. But the psychologist finds faculty and potentiality in the spiritual nature of man; and these the student of human history discovers, working themselves out in "strong" and "luxuriant" religious growths: "conceptions and creeds," the inborn life of man, feeling after God, as plants feel after light. And is this not human consciousness interpreting its own inbred need: psychology and history together bearing testimony that man needs God and the hopes of religion, as plants need light and animals air?¹

Why, then, should the emotional ener-

¹ Mr. Herbert Spencer says, "An unbiassed consideration . . . forces us to conclude that Religion, everywhere present as a weft running through the warp of human history, expresses some eternal fact."—*First Principles*, cap. i., "Religion and Science."

gies, which were alert before "the dawn of science," and that religious feeling which appeared before knowledge, be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," as "disturbers," whilst the "pure reason" pursues in cold solitude those grave inquiries that concern the very core of life and the very mould of character? It is not thus that men act in many of the best and most important movements of life.

The scientist does not form his friendships by efforts of the "pure reason"; nor does the Positivist cement his attachments by logical process. The affections cleave their way, and reach some of their noblest conclusions, without the aid of science or the succour of logic. The emotions are the helpmeet of the intellect in laying hold of those thoughts and hopes of religion that purify character

and ennobled life. The heart that hungers for God may justly claim to take its place and part in seeking for the grand object of its desire.

But the inner sense which yearns for the deeper springs, the emotional aspirations which feel the want of "more life, and fuller," may surely aid the intellect in its search for the fount of immortality. It was one of the great masters of spiritual instruction who said, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;"¹ and, with a profound insight both in respect of the proportions of religion and the necessities of man, addressing the first European disciples of Christianity, he urged the necessity for the growth of the vital principle of religion, not only by the exercises of the intellect, but in quickened

¹ Rom. x. 10.

perceptions by the internal sense—"in full knowledge and in active emotion"—
*ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πασῇ αἰσθήσει.*¹

There is, indeed, no infallibility in the action of religious feeling any more than in that of intellectual effort. Either may be betrayed; but even Professor Huxley confesses that "religious feeling is the essential basis of conduct;" nay, he adds further,—and we welcome his notable admission,—that he is "at a loss to know how it is to be kept up without the use of the Bible."² Truly the need of authoritative guidance in matters pertaining to the spiritual life is manifest; but in ascertaining that guidance and verifying its authority, there is as certainly legitimate scope and exercise for the emotional as for the intellectual functions. And in

¹ Phil. i. 9.

² *Vide infra*, pp. 163 5.

controverting a Sceptic's creed of "Life for the present, unrestrained by considerations of a life in the future," as a creed logically untenable and morally degrading I have for the occasion urged only those central verities of the Christian faith which confessedly exalt the thought, purify the affections, and give dignity to human life. Against these science has no record, and advanced thought no plea.

Professor Huxley says, "The love of moral beauty struggling through a world full of sorrow and sin is surely as much stronger for believing that sooner or later a vision of perfect peace and goodness will burst upon him, as the toiler up a mountain for the belief that beyond crag and snow lies home and rest."¹ And Pro-

¹ "A Modern Symposium." *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1877.

fessor Clifford admitted that "belief in God and a future life is a source of refined and elevated pleasure to those who can hold it."¹ Confessedly, then, faith in God, and the anticipations of life and immortality, adorn and enrich life, imparting to it vigour, courage and content; so that it is more patient under burthens, calmer in peril, scaling the heights of

¹ "A Modern Symposium." *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1877.

"To believe in an ever-living and perfect Mind, supreme over the universe, is to invest moral distinctions with immensity and eternity, and lift them from the provincial stage of human society to the imperishable theatre of all being. When planted thus in the very substance of things, they justify and support the ideal estimates of the conscience; they deepen every guilty shame; they guarantee every righteous hope; and they help the will with a Divine casting-vote in every balance of temptation."—*Vide* Martineau in the same Symposium.

enterprise and effort with a surer footstep and a cheerier heart.

But far be it, assuredly, from science or philosophy to admit that such practical and beneficial results are to be obtained by beguiling human life into the acceptance of some cunning potion of superstition, or philtre of theological alchemy, alien to the true nature and need of man. Human life can only be nourished into more refined and elevated vigour by supplying it with that wholesome aliment that is suited to its constitutional necessities. Physical life is not invigorated by a regimen alien from its natural requirements. And in the nature of things it is impossible that the higher life of man can ripen in force, comeliness and joy upon a diet of "cunningly devised fables," mystic fancies, or night-born superstitions.

The effect upon a human soul of living faith in God, Christ, and immortality evinces the deep necessities in man and the essential fitness of such "elements of life and thought" to satisfy his need and invigorate his being. "*Cor humanum inquietum est, donec requiescat in Deo.*"

And where besides can man find his satisfying portion? The inadequacy of ethics, science, or culture to give peace and content to the deep and ever-widening needs of human life has been freely conceded by scientist and Positivist; and religion is admitted to be necessary to the progress of civilization and the evolution of society.

Mr. Herbert Spencer censures the "bias that undervalues religious systems," and adds, "a religious system is a normal

and essential factor in every evolving society.”¹ Mr. Frederick Harrison actually affirms that “those who teach that the future can be built upon science and civilization are attempting to build a pyramid of bricks without straw.” And, further, he admits that “morals are not adequate to direct human life until they are transfused into that sense of resignation, adoration, and communion with an over-ruling Providence, which is the true mark of religion.”² In another paper the same writer has said, “It is mockery to talk about science, enlightenment, progress, freethought, to the myriads of men and women, and to tell them that these ought to serve them.

¹ *The Study of Sociology.* Cap. xii.

² “Modern Symposium.” *Nineteenth Century* April, 1877.

What can they want more—why ask for religion? The rude men who sweat and swelter in mines, in furnaces, in factories, the hedger and the ditcher, and the cottager, with his pinched home, the women who stitch and serve, the children wandering forlorn and unkempt into rough life,—how are these to be sustained and comforted by science and enlightenment? How will freethought teach discipline to the young and self-restraint to the wild? What sustenance will the imagination and the devotional nature receive from the principle of free inquiry? Human nature is not a thing so docile and intellectual that it can be tamed by fine thoughts, nor is society amenable to pure ideas.”¹ Voltaire said, “Not to believe in

¹ “Creed of a Layman.” *Nineteenth Century*, March, 1881.

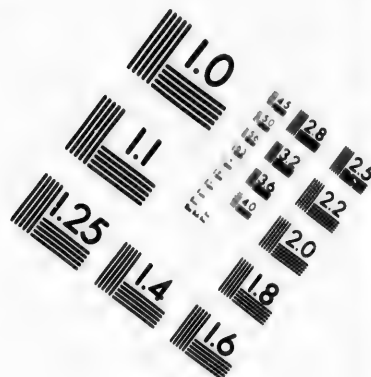
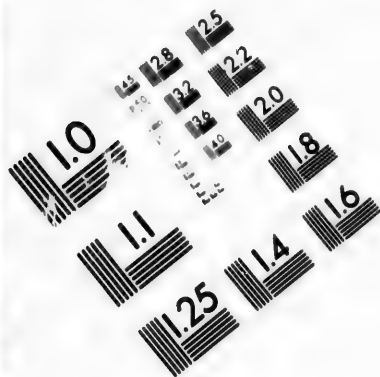
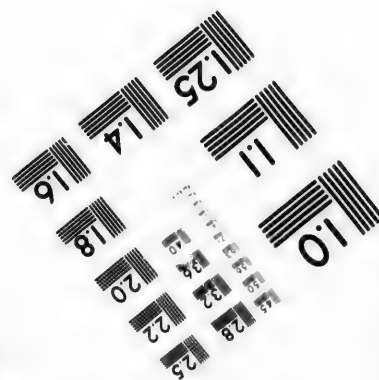
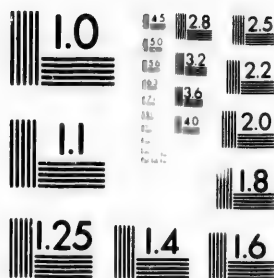


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any God would be an error incompatible with wise government." ¹

Religion, then, is necessary to the progress of civilization, the advancement of society, the joy of life, and the security of good government ; and that, too, a religion which finds its strength and solace, its rapture and triumph, in faith in an Infinite Goodness and the hope of the future life. For Mr. Harrison says again, " How often has the overburdened spirit felt peace amid agony and bereavement ; how often have the dying lips smiled in peace ; what trust and calm have beamed in the eyes of the weakest, the most afflicted, the most forsaken ? We know it all. We, too, have felt all these things. We are not cynics, swinishly deaf to the

¹ *Life of Voltaire*. By J. Morley. "Religion," cap. v.

spiritual voices. Why ask us if we have any such thing in our faith, if we can give these seraphic raptures, these super-human joys and hopes? Certainly not. It is quite possible that no rational faith whatever has any exact equivalent to those miracles in subduing sense, and galvanising certain chords of emotion.”¹

No; Positivist, scientist, and rationalist are constrained to concede that their systems cannot touch the deeper spring of being, thrill life's inmost fibres with a rapturous joy, and brighten dying eyes with the dawn of a lovelier day. For these Divine triumphs we must turn to a religion that reveals Fatherhood, reconciliation, and eternal life.

John Stuart Mill says, “If religion, or

¹ “Creed of a Layman.” *Nineteenth Century*, March, 1881.

any particular form of it, is true, its usefulness follows without other proof." But is this statement not to a certain degree convertible? If religion demonstrates its "usefulness" by purifying, ennobling and enriching life—making it stronger to endure and do, awaking otherwise unstirred sensibilities of exalted emotion, and evoking the highest energies of enterprise and hope—does not its general truth follow from these results?

Mill admits that "some of the precepts of Christ as exhibited in the Gospels . . . carry some kinds of moral goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before." He says that religion, like poetry, supplies "ideal conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realized in the prose of human life."

Again, "So long as human life is insufficient to satisfy human aspirations, so long there will be a craving for higher things, which finds its most obvious satisfaction in religion. So long as earthly life is full of suffering, so long there will be need of consolations, which the hope of heaven affords to the selfish, the love of God to the tender and grateful. The value, therefore, of religion to the individual, both in the past and present, as a source of personal satisfaction and of elevated feelings, is not to be disputed." And one further notable and deeply pathetic concession Mill makes—evidently the still small voice of some tender memory. He grants that "the Sceptic by his scepticism loses one valuable consolation," if only one: "the hope of reunion with those dear to him

who have ended their earthly life before him. That loss indeed is neither to be denied nor extenuated. In many cases it is beyond the reach of comparison or estimate."¹

But a religion exercising such power over human life, bestowing such gifts of holy joy, and attended by such noble results—in short, the complement of man's necessity—must be founded in truth. Falsehood cannot be a gospel of peace, strength, and joy to the toiling, suffering, sinning, dying multitudes. Untruth cannot be a necessary or secure basis on which to build wider and higher the noble superstructure of civilization. Superstition is a treacherous morass, not a firm highway for the advancing footsteps of

¹ *Three Essays on Religion.* No. 2, "Utility of Religion."

human society. "Man," said Carlyle, "is everywhere the born enemy of lies."

Let us advance another step in our argument, aided by a further concession from a distinguished quarter.

Professor Huxley says, "If it is demonstrated that the theological dogma is needful to the higher life of man, then he asks for proof of the dogma." But is the necessity not "proof"? He adds, "If this proof is forthcoming, it is my conviction that no drowning sailor ever clutched a hen-coop more tenaciously than mankind will hold to such dogma, whatever it may be. But if not, then I verily believe that the human race will go on its evil way."¹

¹ "Modern Symposium." *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1877.

Proceeding from such a quarter this is a very remarkable statement. Let us examine it. *First* from a scientist's point of view, it is confessed that something has gone radically wrong in human nature : it is going on "an evil way." But the seasons are not going on an evil way ; day and night are not in confusion ; the forces of the material world keep the laws and do their duty without reproach. What has science then to say in respect of this phenomenon of disorder in the moral world—that whilst nature in its lower sphere goes on the good way of order and regularity in admirable fulfilment of law, there has stolen into the higher nature of humanity the *ἀνομία*—lawlessness, "confusion and every evil work"?

The fact of moral disorder, that Christianity so strenuously urges, the Professor

here admits, but, alas! he can only "fear" that if "the dogma" cannot be proved, the acknowledged mischief must go on.

Then science, at least, has no gospel for this acknowledged moral and social disorder. This is sad enough; but our scientist further represents the human race as a "drowning sailor," eager, in his misery, to clutch at any flotsam. Then, in this view, humanity is "at sea," wrecked too; buffeted by waves against which it has no force adequate to contend, and must sink unless it finds an extraneous deliverance. But this is a very groundwork of Christian doctrine; an elementary principle of the faith. Consenting to this, science concedes half the "dogma"—human nature wrecked and ruined.

A drowning sailor, however, with evi-

dence enough in his desperate need, does not wait for "logical proof" of the sufficient buoyancy of the "hen-coop," but hopefully clutches at it—"drowning men catch *even* at straws"—like those seamen and prisoners, in a famous shipwreck off the coast of Melita, who seized what the perilous occasion offered, and "some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship . . . escaped all safe to land."¹ Is it not simply reasonable, therefore, for the Sceptic to prove the Christian "dogma" by trying it?

But it is no broken fragment, a waif on the waves of time, some hap-hazard deliverance. It is a life-line thrown by a strong yet gentle hand to wrecked and struggling souls; and from the shores rises a great shout of thousands of al-

¹ Acts xxvii. 44.

ready rescued men, to the "drowning sailors," to trust and try the life-line; and myriads more that have gone for ever from the perilous coasts of time, having passed inland, away from gloom and tempest, have left their testimony behind that that life-line is "mighty to save," "even to the uttermost." "Try it," said that profound student of human life, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "Try it. It has been eighteen hundred years in existence, and has one individual left a record like the following? . . . I have given Christianity a fair trial. I was aware that its promises were made only conditionally. But my heart bears me witness, that to the utmost of my power, I have complied with these conditions. Both outwardly and in the discipline of my inward acts and affections, I have

performed the duties which it enjoins, and I have used the means which it prescribes. Yet my assurance of its truth has received no increase. Its promises have not been fulfilled ; and I repent me of my delusion. If neither your own experience nor the history of almost two thousand years has presented a single testimony to this purport ; and if you have read and heard of many who have lived and died bearing witness to the contrary ; and if you yourself have met with some *one*, in whom on any other point you would place unqualified trust, who has on his own experience made report to you that 'He is faithful who promised, and what He promised He has proved Himself able to perform': is it bigotry if I fear that the Unbelief, which prejudices and prevents the experiment,

has its source elsewhere than in the uncorrupted judgment ; that not the strong, free mind, but the enslaved will, is the true original infidel in this instance ?”¹

But Christianity should be tried, if tried at all, according to its own prescribed methods. It is no honest test that disregards the conditions distinctly set down as necessary in order to conduct the experiment successfully.

Dr. Tyndall, in a remarkable paper on “Spontaneous Generation,” has given an account of a series of experiments and their conclusive results. And it is competent to any other scientific inquirer to demonstrate the same conclusions ; but he must be willing to conduct his experiment with like labour, patience and accuracy of observation. If, however, he

¹ *Aids to Reflection*, Aphor. civ.

permits defects in his apparatus, impatience or inexactness in his own observations, he will fail in his results ; but he will have no right to impugn Dr. Tyn-dall's conclusion, till he has accurately followed his experiment. Now the Founder of Christianity said, "If any man willeth to do His will—*ἐάν τις θέλῃ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιεῖν*—he shall know of the doctrine"¹ He demands, then, "the willing mind," the friendly disposition ; the experiment of docile obedience. Prejudice and hostile preconceptions are obstructive elements to the ingress of spiritual light and moral conviction. The perceptions must be clarified by the sympathetic will :—

" . . . Then purg'd with euphrasy and rue
The visual nerve "

¹ S. John vii. 17.

shall have revelations bright, definite
and clear, reaching

“Even to the inmost seat of mental sight.”

The spirit, however, that is always ready to fling its gibe at “the faith of our fathers,” that hails with delight every new objection to Christianity that glides over the currents of human opinion, that is eager to shake hands with the latest “difficulty of belief”; the heart that is at war with good, or the life that is simply too busy with self and time—the things seen that are temporal—to engage in any whole-hearted search after God, or too impatient of control to bear the restraints of religion, is in no fitting mood to try fairly the Christian experiment; and is assuredly as little entitled to pass judgment on the grave issues involved as the

careless and prejudiced experimentalist would be warranted in denying the results of Dr. Tyndall's elaborate experiments in respect of "spontaneous generation."

The Christian has satisfied himself by experiment that the results promised are attainable: to him belong the forces of inward conviction; but if the Sceptic will not prosecute the inquiry, he must not deny the conclusion. He may say, "I decline to make the experiment." But if so—why? Either because he is not anxious in respect of the question, or he is unwilling to reach the foretold conclusion. But this indifference or unwillingness "makes his judgment blind" on the whole question, and discovers at work within himself causes that may, at least as probably, be the secret of his unbelief, as any presumed inadequacy

of Christian evidences. The earnest Sceptic is bound to adopt the test of practical experiment; and until he has so carefully prosecuted the grave inquiry, he is bound to preserve a respectful silence on the question.

I imagine that I hear the Sceptic-murmur of reply, "We fear to believe in the Unseen, to trust the Unknown; we want some evidential facts that will hush intellectual cavil; we want a feeling of certainty :

 "Could we but know
The land that ends our dark uncertain travel,
 Where lie those happier hills and meadows
 low,—
Ah, if beyond the spirit's inmost cavil,
 Aught of that country could we surely know,
 Who would not go?

 " Might we but hear
The hovering angels' high imagined chorus,
 Or catch, betimes, with wakeful eyes and clear

One radiant vista of the realm before us,—
With one rapt moment given to see and hear,
Ah, who would fear?

“‘ Were we quite sure
To find the peerless friend who left us lonely,
Or there by some celestial stream as pure,
To gaze in eyes that here were love-lit only,—
This weary mortal coil, were we quite sure,
Who would endure?’ ”

Yes, and that knowledge, by an inward sense, we say is attainable, a confidence that casts out fear, an assurance that “calms the spirit’s inmost cavil”; but there must be first a willingness to do His will. As the “drowning sailor” struggles with desperate endeavour to “clutch the hen-coop,” so the Sceptic in earnest to find deliverance and sure rescue must “lay hold upon the hope set before *him* . . . an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.”¹

¹ Heb. vi. 18, 19.

"There is but one chance of life," says Professor Ruskin, "in admitting so far the possibility of the Christian verity, as to try it on its own terms. There is not the slightest possibility of finding whether it be true or not first. 'Show me a sign first, and I will come,' you say. 'No,' answers God, 'come first, and then you shall see a sign.'" ¹

The Sceptic, however, is not required to adopt a faith unsustained by outward evidence. There are external, internal, and collateral evidences in ample and varied abundance to command and confirm the Christian faith. Possibly, he may reply, "I cannot accept these evidences as sufficient to authenticate

¹ An Oxford Lecture. *Nineteenth Century*, Jan., 1878.

the Divine origin and historic truth of Christianity."

But has such an objector ever fairly examined these evidences, and weighed them in impartial balances? They satisfied the philosophic insight, the acute research, the ample learning, the keen cross-examination of the great apologists of Christianity. Augustine and Anselm, Pascal and Grotius, Newton and Locke, Watson and Paley, and many others, down to this latest time, not inferior to any Sceptic in masculine vigour of thought, extent of learning, or earnestness of inquiry, have recognised the irrefutable force of the Christian argument, and have yielded their homage to its authority. This is not the place to examine or even to state the Christian evidences; but the fact of their thorough acceptance by

men of the highest probity, keenest intellect, and ripest culture, lends, at least, a high degree of *probability*¹ to their strength and sufficiency, and proves, at any rate, that they are worthy of the most careful and respectful consideration by the earnest-minded Sceptic. They cannot be ignored by any honest inquirer.

A further "difficulty of belief" is suggested by the Sceptic; viz. that "the Christian religion involves inexplicable *mysteries*." But mysteries shadow life on every side. "Now men see not the bright light that is in the clouds."² The disciples of physical science, as well as the disciples of Christianity, are confronted with the incomprehensible and

¹ *Vide supra*, pp. 24-28.

² Job xxxvii. 21.

the mysterious. Professor Tyndall says that having "exhausted physics and reached its very rim, the mighty mystery still looms beyond us. I have, in fact, made no step towards its solution;" and, again, he speaks of being in the presence of "two Incomprehensibles instead of one Incomprehensible."¹ Professor Huxley says: "From the region of disorderly mystery, which is the domain of ignorance, another vast province has been added to science, the region of orderly mystery."² And Mr. Geo. H. Lewes said, concerning the problems of psychology, "Those mysteries will most probably remain for ever unsolved."³ "A Science without mys-

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, Nov., 1878.

² Quoted by Lewes, *Physiology of Common Life*, vol. ii. c. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

tery is unknown ; a Religion without mystery is absurd." ¹ The scientist, then, and the psychologist bear testimony to the presence of mystery both in material phenomena and in the laws of mind. Indeed, life itself is a mystery.

What is life? No man has grasped, or even seen, the subtle entity. Hinting in a throb, a movement, a perfume, the nearness of its hiding-place ; yet it mocks the seeker. It evades the edge of the keenest scalpel. Across the field of the microscope it flutters a fringe of its delicate robe, but no eye has ever caught a glimpse of the unveiled mystery. The eager scientist admits that "it trembles all along the line" of his research, yet it ever eludes his approach;

¹ *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 48.
Vide also cap. "Biogenesis," pp. 91, 92.

like that fabled chalice, that lies where the rainbow touches the earth, but as the seeker advances the phantom arch recedes. So the mystery life evades the keenest inquisitor.

But if the physical universe involves the incomprehensible, and life itself is a mystery, with what reason does the Sceptic stagger at religion because of its mysteries, or reject Christian dogma because it propounds the incomprehensible?

The ostrich, when hard pressed with pursuit, is said to thrust its head into the sand or bush, and thenceforth sees no danger; but the intelligent Sceptic does not imagine that by thrusting his head—where his *heart* cannot follow—into a creed without God, Christ, or immortality, that he has got rid of mys-

teries, and settled all "difficulties of belief," save indeed as the ostrich has settled its danger by refusing to see it.

What has the Sceptic to say in respect of his own being or origin — with a physical structure "fearfully and wonderfully made," with a mental and moral organization that enables him to reason and resolve, to conceive an Infinite Benevolence, and to anticipate immortal life, and with a profound homage to love the one and with joyful hope to expect the other. What has the Sceptic to say in respect of the origin of this complex personality—himself? He will not, in the face of the highest scientific opinion, say that he is the result of "spontaneous generation," that he is "evolved from protoplasm" or "an outcome of organization"

The phrases are familiar, yet every one of them is controverted by the latest science.

"Men of science," said Professor Tyndall in his Belfast address, "will frankly admit their inability to point to any satisfactory experimental proof that life can be developed save from demonstrable antecedent life." Professor Huxley acknowledges that "life precedes organization;" but the effect cannot precede the cause; life, therefore, is not a result of organization. The Sceptic will scarcely, we presume, accept the odd theory of a scientific speculator, who surmises that "the first forms of life were carried from some other planet to this earth on an—aerolite!" Even that fanciful invention does not remove but only thrusts back the difficulty of the origin of life one

stage. Or will the Sceptic trace his ancestry to the *monera* of the deep-sea slime, where "the oldest monera originated," as Haeckel says, "just as crystals form in the matrix?"¹

The fact is, there is no scientific confirmation by experiment of the theory of "spontaneous generation." Haeckel even admits that "the theory of spontaneous generation cannot be experimentally proved unless great difficulties be overcome." Then he candidly adds, that "he who does not assume a spontaneous generation of monera . . . to explain the first origin of life upon our earth, has no other resource but to believe in a supernatural miracle."² Hence to avoid this imminent but distasteful alter-

¹ *The Evolution of Man*, vol. ii. cap. xv.

² *Ibid.*

native, the scientist counsels the acceptance of an unsustained assumption! But this is speculation, not science. And Virchow has himself rebuked the introduction of this gratuitous hypothesis. He says, "No one can adduce a single positive fact in evidence that such spontaneous generation ever took place, and that an inorganic mass, even of this firm of Carbon & Co., was ever transformed into an organic mass. Nevertheless, I admit that if we propose to imagine to ourselves how the first organic being could have originated, there is no alternative but spontaneous generation, unless we recur to creation. *Tertium non datur.* But spontaneous generation is not demonstrated, and we shall be wise to wait for its demonstration. We remember how lamentably all attempts have failed to

find a place for it in tracing the passage of the most elementary forms from the inorganic to the organic kingdom. Haeckel will never be able to explain to us how from the midst of this inorganic world, in which nothing changes, life can come forth. The lapse of time makes no change in mechanical laws; and if we go back to the periods of incandescence in the history of our planet, we may fairly be reminded that intense heat is far more destructive than productive of life."¹

Thus then upon this theory, unsustained "by a single positive fact in evidence that such spontaneous generation ever took place"—a spontaneous evolution of

¹ *Revue Scientifique*. Dec. 8th, 1877. *Vide A Study of Origins*. M. de Pressensé, bk. II., cap. iv. See also Dr. Bree's *Fallacies of Darwinism*.

life from any primordial forms,—hostile scientists and willing doubters fall back with every ingenuity of suggestion and variety of iteration; for if this theory fails them, then they have, by their own confession, “no other resource but to believe in a supernatural miracle,” “no alternative but to recur to creation.” Terrible dilemma! They stand alone, without scientific retreat, confronted with the Christian dogma of life created by an intelligent Will. “The physical laws may explain the inorganic world, the biological laws may account for the development of the organic; but of the point where they meet, of that strange borderland between the dead and the living, science is silent. It is as if God had placed everything in earth and heaven in the hands of nature, but reserved a

point at the genesis of life for His direct appearing.”¹

But passing from himself, what account has the Sceptic to give of the origin and order of that creation of which he is a microcosm? Whence its magnificent structural arrangements, the sustained

¹ *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* (Drummond): “Biogenesis.”

“So far as science can settle anything, this question is settled. The attempt to get the living out of the dead has failed. Spontaneous generation has had to be given up. And it is now recognised on every hand that life can only come from the touch of life. Huxley categorically announces that the doctrine of biogenesis, or life only from life, is ‘victorious along the whole line at the present day.’ And even whilst confessing that he wishes the evidence were the other way, Tyndall is compelled to say, ‘I affirm that no shred of trustworthy experimental testimony exists to prove that life in our day has ever appeared independently of antecedent life.’”—*Ibid.*

Vide also art., “A Limit to Evolution,” by St. George Mivart, *Nineteenth Century*, Aug., 1884.

actions of its forces, the exact and admirable system of laws, not *by* which, but *according to* which it is governed. The "fortuitous concourse of atoms" theory was recognised as preposterous even by a pagan philosopher.

To put Cicero's argument in modern form: As well indeed imagine that the Bodleian Library, with all its treasures of thought, was the product of a series of happy accidents, or that the railway system of Great Britain, with its stupendous work, elaborate organisation, and constant activity, is the outcome of most fortunate chances, as believe that the magnificent order of the universe originated and is sustained without a creative intelligence and a governing will.¹

¹ "Hoc qui existimat fieri potuisse non intelligo, cur non idem putet si innumerabiles unius et

Even pessimists and evolutionists are constrained to acknowledge that at least "the universe looks as though it were planned by conscious intelligence." Hartmann admits "will and intelligence at work in the universe shaping its development"; but into what straits is he driven to cancel the force of his own concession! He says, "the will was unconscious, the intelligence blind"! Haeckel too, in the midst of many negations and qualifications, says, "The more developed man of the present day is capable of, and justified in, conceiving that infinitely nobler and sublimer idea of God, which alone is compatible with the monistic conception of the universe, and which viginti formæ literarum vel aureæ vel qualis libet aliquo conjiciantur, posse ex his in terram excussis annales Ennii, ut de inceptis legi possint effici." —*De Natura Deorum*, lib. iii. 37.

recognises God's Spirit and power in all phenomena without exception. This monistic idea of God, which belongs to the future, has already been expressed by Giordano Bruno, in the following words: 'A spirit exists in all things, and no body is so small but contains part of the Divine substance within itself by which it is animated.'"¹ Mr. Herbert Spencer, in a recent article, says, "Amid the mysteries, which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he [man] is ever in presence of an infinite and eternal Energy, from which all things proceed."² And Professor Tyndall has said, "After

¹ *Vide The Creed of Science* (W. Graham, M.A.).
CHAP. I. "Creation and God."

² "A Retrospect and Prospect."—*Nineteenth Century*, Jan., 1884.

science has completed her mission upon earth, the finite known will still be embraced by the infinite unknown. And 'this boundless contiguity of shade,' by which our knowledge is hemmed in, will always tempt the exercise of belief and imagination. The human mind, in its structural and poetic capacity, can never be prevented from building castles—on the rock or in air, as the case may be—in this ultra-scientific region. Certainly the mind of Carlyle could not have been prevented doing so. Out of pure unintelligence he held that intelligence never could have sprung, and so at the head of things he placed an Intelligence—an Energy, which, to avoid circuitous paraphrase, we call God."¹ Thus hostile

¹ *Speech at the Unveiling of Carlyle's Statue, Oct. 21st, 1882.*

Positivism and unfriendly science are "hemmed in" by the irresistible necessities of actuality. They confess an "ultra-scientific region," an "infinite and eternal Energy, from which all things proceed," and which finally, to "avoid circuitous paraphrase," is designated "God" !

But are we left to no clearer and more decisive expressions on the part of advanced and cultivated thought ?

The Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford says : " We have at length been brought, by philosophical conclusions from the most advanced scientific knowledge of our day, to the philosophical certainty that matter is not eternal, but that from the beginning of nature it was endued with some very wonderful properties by some Intelligent Will. This is the latest and

grandest revelation of nature." ¹ A noble and notable revelation it is indeed, to be made as a "philosophic certainty" by "the most advanced science of the day"!

And the philosopher and metaphysician are in agreement with the physicist. "Creation," said Sir William Hamilton, "is the evolution of existence from possibility into actuality by the fiat of the Deity." "There is one, but only one Absolute Existence, which is strictly *necessary*," says Professor Ferrier; "and that existence is a Supreme and Infinite and Everlasting Mind." ² "Atheism," says the author of *Natural Religion*, "is a disbelief in the *existence* of God; that is, a disbelief in *any* regularity in the universe to which a man must conform himself

¹ *Mod. Science and Nat. Religion.* S.P.C.K.

² *Institutes of Metaphysic*: Prop. xi.

under penalties. Such a disbelief is speculatively monstrous ; it is a kind of mental deficiency or perversion : but so commonly are the false views which lead to immoral action. There is an atheism which is a mere speculative crotchet, and there is an atheism which is a great moral disease." And again, with even more incisive vigour, he says, "of atheism, that demoralising folly of human nature, which consists in the inability to discern in the universe any law by which human life may be guided, there is in the present age less danger than ever, and it is daily made more impossible by science itself."¹

And what says that distinguished naturalist, the renowned Agassiz ? "In my view, nothing shows more directly and

¹ *Natural Religion*. By the author of *Ecce Homo*. Cap. ii. 1882.

absolutely the operation of a reflecting mind, than all these categories, upon which the different species, genera, families, orders, classes are based in nature; nothing more clearly indicates a deliberate consideration of the subject than the real and material manifestation of all these characteristics by a succession of individuals whose life is limited to a duration comparatively very short. The great marvel of all these relations consists in the fugitive character of all the parts of this great harmony. While the species is persistent during long periods, the individuals which represent it change constantly and die, one after the other in rapid succession. Nothing in the organic kingdom is calculated to impress us so strongly as the unity of plan which is apparent in the structure of the most

various types. From pole to pole, under all meridians, the mammalia, birds, reptiles, fishes exhibit one and the same structural plan. The plan denotes abstract conceptions of the most elevated order ; it far surpasses the broadest generalisations of the mind of man, and it required the most laborious research to enable man to arrive at any adequate idea at all of it. Other plans not less marvellous disclose themselves in the articulata, the molluscs, the radiata, and the various types of plants. And yet this logical relation, this admirable harmony, this infinite variety in unity represent, we are told, the result of forces devoid of the least particle of intelligence, of the faculty of thought, the power of combination, or the conception of space. If anything in nature can place man above the other animals, it is just the

possession of these noble powers. Without these gifts, carried to a high degree of excellence and perfection, none of the general marks of relationship which connect the great types of the vegetable and animal kingdom could be perceived or understood. How then could these relations have been conceived, but by the aid of analogous faculties? If all these relations are beyond man's intellectual power to grasp, if man himself is but a part or fragment of the whole system, how could this system have been called into being if there were not a supreme intelligence, the Author of all things?"¹

But what has the Sceptic, who boasts that he lives for the present and the seen,

¹ Address to the Univ. of Massachusetts: *Revue de Cours Scientifiques*. Vide De Pressensé's *Hist. of Origins*. Cap. iv.

and rejects the supernatural, and who comforts and flatters himself that in some way he is under the sheltering ægis of science, a disciple of advanced thought, to say to these "latest conclusions," and "grandest revelations of science and philosophy"? Does he pass them by with averted eyes? or does he venture deliberately to reject them? If so, on what intellectual grounds?

With what weapons of "logic," or by what process of "pure reason" does the Sceptic propose to discomfit the physicist and to rout the metaphysician? For he must find himself at war with allies whose aid he has invoked. He is like that unhappy "son of Zippor," who having summoned a seer to curse his enemies, found the prophetic utterance to abound in blessing. "A little philosophy," said

Bacon, "inclineth men's minds to atheism ; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." ¹

Possibly however the Sceptic has taken refuge with the agnostic at the modern shrine of "the Unknowable." But surely this very designation is a solecism. The *Unknowable* must be at any rate the unknown ; but with what logical consistency can anything be predicated concerning the unknown ? We can have no data on which to arrive at any determinate conclusion concerning the unknown, even to the extent that it is unknowable. Of the unknown it is incompetent to say that there are no possible conditions in which it may become *knowable*, and ultimately actually *known*.

Mr. Herbert Spencer indeed, the emi-

¹ *Essays*, xvi., "Atheism."

nent exponent of agnosticism, knows so much of the Unknowable as to describe it as "the All-Being," "the Ultimate Reality," "the Sole Existence"; and yet even further as "an infinite and eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained." ¹

Here surely the chief priest of the Unknowable himself leads us within the felt shadow, into the recognised presence of the supreme Author and Sustainer of all being.

But around this shrine of the Unknow-

¹ *Vide Nineteenth Century*, 1884, "Retrospect and Prospect" (January); and "Retrogressive Religion" (July), where the above remarkable admission is made and defended.

"Men are constantly affirming certain existences to be unknown and unknowable, yet in the same breath affirming relations of them which presuppose knowledge."—G. H. Lewes: *Hist. of Philosophy*: "Some Infirmities of Thought." xciv.

able the philosophers are themselves at war: agnostic and Positivist are at "daggers drawn." Mr. Frederick Harrison tells Mr. Herbert Spencer that "the worship of the Unknowable is abhorrent to every genuine instinct of religion." "A religion without anything to be known, with nothing to teach, with no moral power, with some rags of religious sentiment surviving, mainly the consciousness of mystery—this is, indeed, the mockery of religion."¹

¹ "Agnostic Metaphysics."—*Nineteenth Century*, Sept., 1884.

Mr. Harrison further writes in the same article: "Mr. Spencer must remember that in his religion of the Unknowable he stands almost alone. He is, in fact, insisting to mankind, where all men have some opinion, on one of the most gigantic paradoxes in the history of thought. I know myself of no single thinker in Europe who has come forward to support this religion of an Unknowable Cause, which cannot be presented in terms of

Does the Sceptic, who turns his back upon the first principles of the Christian religion, hope to find rest and satisfaction for his higher life in a "worship," that one of the most "advanced thinkers" says, "is abhorrent to every genuine instinct of religion"? Does the Sceptic expect to find answer to his questionings or content for

consciousness, to which the words emotion, will, intelligence cannot be applied with any meaning, and yet which stands in the place of a supposed anthropomorphic Creator. Mr. George H. Lewes, who of all modern philosophers was the closest to Mr. Spencer, and of recent English philosophers the most nearly his equal, wrote ten years ago : 'Deeply as we may feel the mystery of the universe and the limitation of our faculties, *the foundations of a creed can only rest on the known and the knowable.*' With that I believe every school of thought but a few dreamy mystics have agreed. . . . So say agnostics, materialists, sceptics, Christians, Catholics, Theists, and Positivists. All with one consent disclaim making a religion of the Unknowable."

his heart in "a religion without anything to be known, with nothing to teach,"—save indeed a doctrine of despair, that the God he has not known is, alas! the eternally *Unknowable*? This surely is "retrogressive religion," rather than "advanced thought."

Eighteen centuries ago there was an altar in ancient Athens inscribed, "*To the Unknown God.*"¹ But a ray of hope lingered around that shrine. Its inscription left open the possibility of a more definite dedication. And one day a stranger, who had observed in the city the objects of Athenian devotion, proclaimed on Mars Hill, "What ye worship not knowing, I declare unto you." The Athenian confessed that he was in a gloom, dimly lighted; but the door of his

¹ Acts xvii. 16, *et seq.*

temple stood open to the morning, and the day dawned in the revelation of God. But the worshippers of the *Unknowable*, not only say that they are in the dark, but that light is impossible; that this night can have no morning; that a constitutional incapacity precludes the very possibility of their ever knowing the "All-Being," the "Ultimate Reality"; that they have no faculty of vision for the Unseen, that they are blind men worshipping, not only they know not what, but what they never can know. This indeed is a doctrine of despair.

But surely there is the indication of hope, even in the agnostic's own showing; for since he knows so much of the Unknowable as to speak of "an infinite and eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained," he may yet, by

the happy advances of sincere and patient inquiry, know more. Talents multiply by use, and faculties strengthen by effort. We contend that the agnostic diagnosis is at fault; that there is no inherent and essential incapacity in the nature and constitution of man, which makes the knowledge of the "All-Being" impossible. On the contrary, we affirm that it has been proved to a demonstration, in the experience of a multitude that no man can number, that in the economy of life in which man is placed by the "eternal Energy that creates and sustains all things," God is knowable, and that the filial hunger of the human soul finds its eternal content in God's revealed Fatherhood.

But there may be a moral and spiritual obliquity of vision making dim

the eternal light. The law of light for the inner life is, "he that willeth to do His will shall know of the doctrine." Our fraternal wish is that through some opening window of the will there may steal on every honest agnostic that light, more beautiful than the light of morning, which has already touched some of their number with rosy hope, and that in that day-dawn of the life they may see with opened vision the Unseen, and know Him whom to know is life eternal.¹

But is there any other scheme devised

¹ An able and appreciative essay, entitled *An Examination of Mr. Herbert Spencer's Philosophy*, has been published by the Victoria Institute, together with a report of the discussion that followed the reading of the paper before the society. The whole is worthy of a careful consideration by those who have felt the influence of Spencer's remarkable powers.

or discovered by the ingenious research of human philosophy that can satisfy the needs or develop the possibilities of human life? Is there any other point of the philosophical compass to which the Sceptic, seeking intellectual *prestige* and moral content and safety, may run for refuge, and find it?

Does he seek sanctuary at the altar of Positivism, and shelter under the great name of M. Comte? Does he hope to enjoy there the philosophic calm, and to find unanimity among "advanced" thinkers? Alas for his disappointment! He will find Mr. Herbert Spencer there, but not to worship, only to war. The agnostic chief is now in his turn the assailant. He defiantly invades the sacred retreat, mocks the famous founder of the shrine of the Positive philosophy,

and wounds with the keen shafts of his ridicule the belated worshippers of Humanity. He derides "the absurdities of the Comtean religion," and "dissents from every one of the fundamental principles which distinguish his system."¹ And of M. Comte himself, Mr. Herbert Spencer says that he manifested "a height of assumption exceeding that ever before displayed by a human being," and that "he exhibited a lack of mental balance unparalleled among sane people."² All this and much beside Mr. Herbert Spencer urges with distinctive vigour. Thus the unhappy Sceptic finds neither peace nor protection among the philo-

¹ *Vide The Classification of the Sciences*: "Reasons for dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte." 1871.

² "Retrogressive Religion," *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1884.

sophers. He is wounded in the house of the friends among whom he has sought sanctuary.

Positivism advocates, as the satisfaction of that religious instinct, deep in the heart of man, of which Mr. Frederick Harrison has told us so much and so many things, the worship of Humanity. But is such a worship in any true and real sense possible? If possible, *cui bono*? What possible good can accrue either to the humanity worshipping or the Humanity worshipped? M. Comte speaks of "veneration and gratitude rising into enthusiastic admiration of the Great Being (Humanity), who is the author of all beneficent progress." Mr. Herbert Spencer however replies to this that "veneration or gratitude to any being implies belief in the conscious action

of that being ; . . . gratitude cannot be entertained to something unconscious. But the Great Being Humanity has no corporate consciousness whatever. If the Great Being Humanity, who is the author of all these conquests of human progress, is unconscious, the emotions of veneration and gratitude are absolutely irrelevant." And he adds that since "veneration and gratitude are surely due somewhere, they are due, if due at all, to that Ultimate Cause from which humanity, as a whole, in common with all other things, has proceeded."¹ Thus we are brought back, even by the hand of the distinguished agnostic philosopher, from the worship of Humanity to that of the Supreme Creative Being.

¹ *Vide* "Retrogressive Religion" (a rejoinder to Mr. F. Harrison), *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1884.

The mythical school talk of "adoring the Universe"; but if there is no "Supreme and Absolute Mind," then man is the crowning work of the universe. The higher however must not worship or adore the lower, so we draw back to the Positivists' Humanity. But if this is self-worship, it is, as Père Hyacinthe has shown,¹ only a thinly disguised egotism; or if it is the worship of self in some or all of human kind, it is "what is called to-day, in rather barbarous French, *l'altruisme*."

So deep and dominant is the instinct of worship, that the unbeliever cannot rest and be thankful in his system of negations. The agnostic offers his "veneration and gratitude," his dark and hopeless worship, to the partially known *Unknowable*. The

¹ "Paganism in Paris," *Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1880.

Positivist has his sanctuary, services, and sacraments; his calendar and catechism; his canonization of saints and solemn processions, with banners having "on the white side the holy image, and on the green the sacred formula of Positivism"; and his "symbol of divinity is always to be a woman of the age of thirty, with her child in her arms." "Papal assumption," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "is modest compared with the founder of the religion of Humanity."¹

"What is Humanity?" says another advocate of free thought, Mr. Goldwin Smith. "Is it an abstraction? I must say, I would rather worship a stone idol, which at least has real existence. Is it an

¹ *Vide Catechisme Positiviste*; Comte, Paris, 1874. Mr. Herbert Spencer's "Retrogressive Religion," and Père Hyacinthe's "Paganism in Paris."

aggregate? Then it excludes the wicked. Is it an induction? Then it will be incomplete till the scene of history is closed. I believe that it is an ideal, and I declare that I fail to see how it differs from the ideal of the Christian."¹

But the ideal of the Christian had "corporeal consciousness." He was "the surprise of history"; a unique personality, who "appeared among the wondering peoples as a stranger from another sphere," and by doing and demanding the hitherto impossible, He burst the prison doors of reality and opened the path of enlightened liberty and immortal hope to men of every land and age and condition.²

¹ "Evolutionary Ethics and Christianity."—*Contemp. Rev.*, Dec., 1883.

² "The victory over disintegrating egoism and deadly chillness of the heart will only be won by

And they who through Him have found the way of the new life are a countless and ever-increasing host.

M. Thiers, looking up to the glory of the midnight sky, said, 'C'est là ma messe.' Three thousand years before, another gazer at the same wondrous firmament exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God." But whether did the ancient

a great ideal, which shall appear amid the wondering peoples as a 'stranger from another world,' and by demanding the impossible unhinges the reality." And he adds in the same chapter, "Whether the battle remains a bloodless conflict of minds, or whether, like an earthquake, it throws down the ruins of a past epoch with thunder into the dust, and buries millions beneath the wreck, certain it is that the new epoch will not conquer unless it be under the banner of a great idea, which sweeps away egoism and sets human perfection in human fellowship, as a new aim in the place of the restless toil which looks only to personal gain."—*Hist. of Materialism* (Lange). Cap. iv. "The Standpoint of the Ideal."

Hebrew seer or the modern French statesman represent the more truly "the latest revelation of science," or "that faculty of worship" which even Mr. Fred. Harrison admits "is ever fresh in the heart"?

An invalid mother said one day to her child, standing by the foot of her couch, and apparently delighted with some *bonbons*, "Do you love them, darling?" For a moment there was a perplexed look on the bright little face, and then the child replied, "No ; I cannot love them, they have no face." Deeper wisdom of the innocent life ! Love implies intelligent sympathy and responsive affection ; but there can be no true, ennobling worship without love ! Man may admire the universe, and gaze with wonder and rapt delight at the starry glory of the midnight skies ; but he cannot love them. "They

have no face"—no personality ; and the personal life of man demands, as the object of a real and loyal worship, the personal God. There can be no true worship of an absolute mystery, no love for an "All-Being" of which nothing is known save that it is the ever *Unknowable*.

Humanity in its eventful history touches deeply and touches many chords of thought, feeling and sympathy ; but, whether considered as an "abstraction" or an "aggregate," Humanity has no "corporate consciousness" by which it can receive worship, nor any "conscious action" by which it can refresh the worshipper. "I would rather worship a stone idol," says Mr. Goldwin Smith ; but if there can be found in humanity One who is the human ideal, albeit illumined with some splendours of a higher glory, is He not truly

the more fitting object of human love and homage? However that may be, most certain it is that the filial longing within the human soul cannot be satisfied by enkindling the sentiments of wonder, awe, or admiration. It wants fellowship — Fatherhood. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."¹ And that great human cry has not been left without response. One has declared Himself to be the revealer of God, and to bring the Divine within the range of human apprehension. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

But possibly the Sceptic may admit the existence of a "Supreme Intelligent Will,"

¹ S. John xiv. 8, 9.

For a very admirable and exhaustive treatment of the Theistic argument see Professor Flint's *Theism*, and his further treatise, *Anti-Theistic Theories*. (Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh.)

"the One Absolute and Everlasting Mind." Then indeed he must prefix a momentous article to his creed, viz. "I believe in God"; but in doing so he concedes half "the Christian dogma." On what evidence however does he make this large concession? What is the proof that commands his assent to this supernatural doctrine—a fact so stupendous in itself, and fraught with such important issues? In kind or degree, is the proof in this case superior to that which is offered in confirmation of other essential verities of the Christian faith? I think not. It is only the first grand link of a series, by which we are

"Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Here however arises the grave, practical question: if the Sceptic acknowledges the

Supreme Intelligence, then what is his relation to Him? what effort is the Sceptic making to learn the Divine character, and to do His will? Surely a mere pagan living for the present and the seen, without consideration for the future or reverence for the unseen, can be no proper result of an honest acceptance of that first and fundamental article of the Christian creed—belief in an august and benevolent Will—a personal God. Professor Francis A. Newman says: “The claim of retaining a belief in God, while rejecting a personal God, I do not know how to treat with respect. . . . To deny personality to God denies that mind and morality are part of His essence, and denies everything that can distinguish God from blind force or blind fate. Such an application of the word ‘God’ is delusive and evasive. An

atheist may thus profess to believe in God."

But a belief in a personal God should work itself through the convictions into the character and out into the life. Granted the existence of *God*, it cannot be reasonable to exclude the thought of Him from the aims and acts and hopes of life. The Sceptic's position therefore, whose creed is, "I believe in God, but I yield Him no place in my thoughts or affections; for I live for the present and let the future take care of itself," is as irrational as it is immoral. With such a Sceptic, indeed, unbelief or doubt is no longer so much a matter of mental difficulty as of moral disinclination; it is less a question of the intellect than of the conscience and the will.

But another question blocks the path of

the Sceptic: "What becomes of the personal life at what is called death?" At some juncture in the life a great change transpires; it may be in a moment or by slow degrees,—a change not at first in the material measurement of the physical frame, but in the disappearance of the vital energies of the reason and affections, of the understanding and volition, which constitute the *ego*, the personal self. It has disappeared—is gone: whither? What solution does unbelief offer to that problem? Is the solution contained in that gloomy polysyllable *annihilation*, with its maximum of measurement and minimum of meaning? Does science know anything of this dark pretender, *annihilation*? Science speaks of the conservation of energy, and of matter as changeable in form, but indestructible in fact. Are we

then to believe that the corporeal frame is an indestructible quantity, but that the inner life, the proper manhood, with all its sublime capacities, possibilities, hopes, its filial cry for God, its yearning for immortality, falls, before the arrow of the archer Death, into the dark abyss of nothingness? That has been an impossible thought to earnest souls from the days of Pythagoras to the present. Kant asserted that "a future life is a necessary postulate of the practical reason."

"No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
O life, not death for which we pant :
More life, and fuller, that I want."

Deep in human life, when brought face
to face with this grand question, lies the
conviction that at death the dust shall

"return to the earth as it was : and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."¹

I oppose then to the Sceptic's creed of "Life for the present, let the future take care of itself," under any of its many verbal modifications, "Life for God, in the faith of Christ, with the assured hope of immortality." And I ask which is the worthier symbol of belief? which is the more fitted to the needs and possibilities of human being, to exalt the thoughts, regenerate the character, to quicken and brighten all the life of man? I commend to the Sceptic's serious thought the Christian religion,—the one religion that preserves, amid all the mutations of time and the changing aspects of human thought and need, its quenchless vitality and vigour. As

¹ Eccles. xii. 7.

"—the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns,"

its "excelsior" banner still waves upon the heights. Amid the complicated conditions of our civilization, Christianity is still at the head of every benevolent enterprise; it has a sympathy for every sorrow, a strength for every burden, for every sin a Saviour; and there is no purity of character or elevation of life, no noble aspiration, but finds in Christianity the sanction and stimulus of a yet higher ideal. Between this religion and the most inquisitive science or the most cultured intelligence there is no necessary antagonism.¹ Christianity, indeed, often misunderstood, often misrepresented, only

¹ "Under their seeming antagonism [Religion and Science] lies hidden entire agreement."—Mr. Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*. Cap. i.

attains its full and symmetrical proportions in an atmosphere of enlightened thought and earnest inquiry. It is the one religion that, at the present day, is sympathetically busy and actively helpful in the world's progressive life. Let an impartial witness testify. "Progress is conterminous with Christendom. Outside the pale of Christendom all is stationary. There have been noble outbursts of material wealth and splendour, transient flashes even of intellectual brilliancy, as in the caliphates and Mogul empire, though the light in these cases was mainly borrowed; real and sustained progress there has been none. Japan, to whatever she may be destined to come, has kindled her new civilization with a coal from the Christian hearth.¹

¹ "Evolutionary Ethics and Christianity" (Goldwin Smith).—*Contemporary Review*, Dec., 1883.

Further, let me commend to the Sceptic the more careful and anxious study of that remarkable literature in which Christianity finds its exposition and authority, the Bible—a book *sui generis*.

The Bible, indeed, is not so much a book as it is a literature: the derivation of its title tells this story. It is a literature of fragments, written by different men — dissimilar in temperament, culture, rank, and social habit: separated in many cases by the long interval of eventful centuries; written too in almost every variety of style — history, poetry, proverb, prophecy, parable, ethics, and doctrine; yet somehow gathering all together into one interdependent and organic whole: *bibliotheca divina*—a sacred library—as S. Jerome designated this unique literature. It comes to us, not

from any of those great eastern monarchies, distinguished in arms and arts, in wealth and civilization, contemporaneous with its earlier books, nor from that land of classic wisdom and achievement, whose most brilliant age shortly preceded the writings of the later Testament, but from a race inferior in civilization and culture and art; yet a renowned statesman and eminent scholar has said of one single book of the Bible, "All the wonders of the Greek civilization heaped together are less wonderful than is the single book of Psalms."¹

In every age, from Longinus to Byron,

¹ Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone. Speech at Edinburgh.

"Historia instruit, lex docet, prophetia annunciat, correptio castigat, moralitas suadet; in libro Psalmorum profectus est omnium, et medicina, quædam salutis humanæ."—*S. Ambrose*.

rhetorician and poet have praised the style and beauty found in the Bible. It lent a higher glow to Milton's stately page, and Carlyle invoked its aid to give vigour to his trenchant style. The arts—painting, music, architecture—owe some of their noblest productions to its ever-flowing inspiration. But it has a higher function and nobler mission among men. It claims to be "able to make men wise unto salvation"¹; and tens of thousands of the wisest and the best have acknowledged the validity of that unique profession, and confess that they have found in the Holy Scriptures the secret of the new life, the "life hid with Christ in God."

Even those who have failed to find

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15-17

the hidden springs of the Bible have yet confessed the wonder and the wisdom of it in language aglow with a generous admiration. Let us call a scientist to witness. Speaking of the influence of the Bible in education, Professor Huxley says: "I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, was to be kept up in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion on these matters without the use of the Bible. The pagan moralists lack life and colour, and even the noble Stoic, Marcus Antoninus, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. Take the Bible as a whole, make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate, as a sensible lay-teacher would

do if left to himself, all that is not necessary for children to occupy themselves with, and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is familiar to noble and simple from John O'Groat's House to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso were once to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of a mere literary form; and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the

farthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanised, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval of two eternities; and earns the blessings or the curses of all times, according to its effort to do good and to hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work." ¹

But says the Sceptic possibly, "I cannot accept the theory of the inspiration of the Bible." What theory of *inspiration*? The Bible itself has formulated no theory of its own inspiration. The Church has pronounced no authoritative definition of inspiration. Holy Scriptures are their

¹ "The School Boards." *Contemp. Rev.*, Dec., 1870.

own best witness. Human definitions are apt to be too strait for Divine subjects. Those who know the Bible best, who have drunk most deeply at its hidden springs, have the truest understanding of its inspiration ; but they may not be able to define the divineness of it. Let the earnest, honest Sceptic search this sacred literature, look into it with eager and inquiring eyes, even as they who watch for the morning ; and upon the horizon of his life will some day dawn a ruddier glow, the herald lights that broaden into day.

My sceptic friend, I offer you these counsels with a brother's heart. The memory of sorrow mellows the spirit to sympathy with kindred suffering. I too have been haunted in the gloom with spectral forms of doubt, disturbing and distressing with their ghostly movement

otherwise peaceful hours, and giving many a tremor to the heart, many a trouble to the mind. Even yet—not indeed when thought is most wakeful, and the vision strongest, but in those seasons of darkness and of dreams that fall athwart the life,—I sometimes imagine that I see the arras tremble, or that I hear strange footfalls on the stair. I do not wish you to “make your judgment blind,” but rather that you should “fight your doubts and gather strength.” And in the foregoing cumulative argument it has been my anxious though humble endeavour to help you to “face the spectres of the mind and lay them, that at length you may find a stronger faith your own.” “He who has a faith, we know well, is twice himself.”¹

¹ *Natural Religion* : vide p. 35.

But take heed, in an age distinguished by the rapid diffusion of knowledge, the spread of education, the discoveries of science, and the increasing luxuries of material possessions, lest the hidden life and its higher needs become unheeded, lest the energies of faith be left without due exercise, and the realm of their proper activity become a region untravelled and unknown. "With our sciences and cyclopædias," said Carlyle, "we are apt to forget the *divineness* in these laboratories of ours. We ought not to forget it. That once well forgotten, I know not what else were worth remembering. . . . Man cannot know either unless he can worship in some way."¹ And again said this stout and earnest sage, "Without religion constantly present in the heart,

¹ *Hero Worship.*

I see not how a man can live otherwise than unreasonably, than desperately."¹

The author of *Ecce Homo* bears his testimony also. "The scientific life is less noble than the Christian; it is better, so to speak, to be a citizen in the New Jerusalem, than in the New Athens."² But He who made manifest the Divine Fatherhood, who "brought life and immortality to light,"³ whose voice in the process of the ages gains both in volume and clearness, makes known a faith and worship that transcend the limitations of locality and the confines of sect. "There is neither Jew nor Greek"—neither Jerusalem nor Athens—"neither bond nor free"⁴; "but in every nation he

¹ *Life of Thomas Carlyle*, vol. ii. p. 264.

² *Ecce Homo*, p. xxiv. ³ 2 Tim. ii. 10.

⁴ Gal. iii. 28.

that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him"¹; "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him"²; "if any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."³

¹ Acts x. 35.

² S. John iv. 23.

³ S. John vii. 17.

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"No man who knows the splendor of scientific achievement or cares for it, no man who feels the solidity of its method or works with it, can remain neutral with regard to religion. He must extend his method into it or, if that is impossible, oppose it to the knife."—*Preface.*

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